
SCONUL Focus

Number 45

2009

Contents

ISSN 1745-5782 (print)
ISSN 1745-5790 (online)

3	The Subject Librarian issue
4	It's all up for grabs: developing a new role for the academic liaison team at NTU <i>Clifford Neal, Heather Parsonage, Heather Shaw</i>
8	Academic support at Leeds Metropolitan Library <i>Kristy Carver, Lindsay Joyce, Liz Lanfear, Fiona Middleton, Alison Park, Sue Smith,</i>
12	Changing times: the changing role of assistant librarians in DIT's Aungier St library <i>Alison Kavanagh</i>
15	S.O.S - Supporting Other Students: the role of student library ambassadors at Southampton Solent University <i>Graeme Barber</i>
20	The evolving information professional: the changing role of the Open University subject librarian <i>Katharine Reedy, Duncan Belk</i>
24	The changing nature of subject liaison at St Mary's University College, Twickenham <i>Jonathan Lucas, Frank Quick</i>
27	Reflecting roles: being a successful subject liaison librarian in a changing environment <i>Christopher Cipkin, David Stacey</i>
31	While we're on the subject: experiences and reflections of a medical subject librarian <i>Nancy Graham</i>
34	Academic liaison librarians - where do we stand? <i>Alice Crawford</i>
37	Changing roles for changing times: experience from the LJMU off-campus team <i>Cath Marlowe, Rosie Diver</i>
41	Departure from the library desk! One undergraduate programme's story of its subject librarian's evolving role <i>Suanne Gibson, Julie Luxton</i>
45	UCL subject librarians get WISE in Moodle <i>Angela Jeffkins</i>
48	Delivering academic support at the University of Sussex Library <i>Emma Walton, Jane Harvell</i>
50	Research support at the University of Glasgow library <i>Susan Ashworth</i>
52	How I became a 'liaison' librarian <i>Mark Tynan</i>
55	A week in the life of a subject librarian - with a difference! <i>Helen Riley</i>
58	All that David Copperfield kind of c**p <i>Pat Noon</i>
64	From Saturday assistant to Chartered Librarian: a case study in career development <i>Pam Young</i>
66	The academic writing toolkit: writing for professional and peer-reviewed journals <i>Helen Fallon</i>
72	Peer observation and information skills teaching: feel the fear and do it anyway! <i>Sarah Castle</i>
76	Managing, marketing, maximising: creating an information resources development policy to further academic-library relations <i>Valerie Kendlin</i>
78	Hidden treasures revealed at Liverpool John Moores University <i>Valerie Stevenson</i>
81	Exploiting special collections: using digital methods to enhance their research and learning potential <i>Stella Butler</i>
86	Obtaining accessible alternative-format materials for print-impaired students: <i>Aly Peacock, Paul Conway, Lois Burt, Chris Beevers and Audrey Cobb</i>
90	Make the numbers count: improving students' learning experiences <i>Jan Conway, Tania Olsson, Nick Veale</i>

94	Using survey and usage statistics to improve libraries <i>Phil Sykes</i>
100	'UIS – serious about research': focus groups with research staff at Swansea University <i>Katrina Dalziel, Rachael Whitfield</i>
104	A good year for the RIN <i>Sarah Gentleman</i>
108	NoWAL's fifth – a symphony of success <i>Peter M. Wynne</i>
113	Building on collaboration: the WHELP e-book deal <i>Jeremy Atkinson, Paul Riley</i>
117	Set your library staff free with RFID: a case study from Cardiff University <i>Linda Davies, Lindsay Roberts</i>
122	Beyond DECs <i>Chris Moon</i>
125	Library services for all ages, all abilities and all levels – welcome to Buxton! <i>Maria Carnegie</i>
128	SCONUL working group on information literacy <i>Alison Mackenzie</i>
130	CILIP/SCONUL Health Strategy Group <i>Kath O'Donovan</i>
131	RLUK/SCONUL digest of scholarly communication news <i>Frederick J. Friend</i>
137	Building for the Future <i>David Perrow</i>
139	'Designing Libraries' – progress report on 2008 <i>Alan J. Clark</i>
142	Adding value to the SCONUL Performance Portal <i>Tracey Stanley</i>
144	The National Student Survey: pain or gain? <i>Tracey Stanley</i>
148	SCONUL Canadian study tour 27 September – 11 October 2008 <i>Maxine Melling</i>
155	New opportunities for strategic engagement <i>Antony Brewerton</i>
158	NoWAL conference, 'Up close and personal: our changing roles in a digital learning age', <i>Leo Appleton</i>
159	Now that's what I call Library 2.0: The Cilip Multimedia, Information and Technology Group Conference, <i>Leo Appleton</i>
160	The Library in the twenty-first century <i>Reviewed by Valerie Stevenson</i>
161	Reader development in practice: bringing literature to readers <i>Reviewed by Valerie Stevenson</i>
163	New publications
163	News from member libraries
168	NEEO
169	Advice for authors

Editorial information

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Published 3 times per year. Price £23.00 inland, £28.00 overseas.

The views expressed in SCONUL Focus are not necessarily those of SCONUL or of SCONUL Focus editorial team.

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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.

The Subject Librarian issue

At my library at the University of Warwick we have recently articulated what business we are in with a new mission statement. Our aim for our members is to be “connecting you with information, support and your community”. All three elements are hugely important for us but – as Head of Academic Support – I suppose I would give the edge to the ‘support’ part of our trinity. I am oft to quote the comment in the OCLC *Perceptions* report by the Australian undergraduate who points to this as his chief positive association with libraries:

“Being at University allows you membership of a large and well respected library on campus. There are librarians and other staff who can help you if you need advice, whereas searching online you can’t ask anyone for help.”¹

Although this may be slightly overstating the case, I think we as librarians should more readily recognise this as a key element of our USP.

But what is the nature of this support? With a Research Libraries UK hat on I recently put a plea out on library lists for colleagues to send me copies of subject librarian job descriptions to see what support they are offering, especially for research.

I was frankly astounded by the response. I heard from 33 institutions and was sent details of 62 posts. I also received a lot of messages from other colleagues wanting to know about my findings – so expect an article in a future issue of *Focus*.

Although I still have to do more to really work through the detail of this collection I can share some headline messages with you now.

Nearly all the posts contain the ‘traditional’ aspects of the subject librarian role that you would expect. These typically include:

- liaison with the academic community;
- collection management/development;
- budget management;
- information skills training;
- enquiry support;
- production of guides/Web pages, etc.

Most are concerned predominantly with teaching and learning support but some roles are now starting to focus on meeting the needs of researchers, with responsibility for the IR, RAE and REF (to name a few letters) appearing in some post details.

The richness found in these documents is reflected in the testimonials of subject librarians contained in this special issue of *SCONUL Focus*, with staff at all levels describing what the role means to them. Colleagues at Nottingham Trent University, Leeds Metropolitan University and Dublin Institute of Technology describe what they typically do, whilst Helen Riley from my own library describes a more atypical week, albeit one based on the core skills of liaison, networking and teaching information skills.

But there are also new aspects to be found in the job descriptions I have collected. There appears to be an increasing emphasis on e-learning, staff management, project work, work with other agencies, and – I am most pleased to say – marketing.

Change looks to be a constant in many of the posts reviewed. This is reflected in articles by Reedy and Belk, Lucas and Quick, and Cipkin and

Stacey, who contrast the experience of different liaison staff at different points in their career.

This theme continues even in the conference reviews in this issue, with details of the NoWAL Conference which looked at “the changing role of library and information professionals within the academic sector” and the SCONUL Autumn Conference which highlighted yet more opportunities to support the research agenda.

Not so long ago – in the dark days of the ‘Bangor Eight’ – it seemed the ‘subject librarian issue’ concerned the future of this creature². Four years on, the articles collected in this ‘subject librarian issue’ of *SCONUL Focus* illustrate the richness of the support our liaison staff offer. Something of which we should be proud.

Antony Brewerton
SCONUL Focus Editorial Board

NOTES

1. Cathy De Rosa et al. *Perceptions of libraries and information resources: a report to the OCLC membership*, Dublin, Ohio: OCLC, 2005, p.B-27
2. Polly Curtis. Bangor librarians face internet threat, *The Guardian*, 16 February 2005, at www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2005/feb/16/highereducation.careers [accessed 20.01.09]

It's all up for grabs: developing a new role for the academic liaison team at NTU

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BACKGROUND

In February 2005, libraries and learning resources (LLR) at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) carried out a series of workshops with academic staff and students to identify the values and irritants of its customers.¹ The workshops uncovered a clear demand for the development of a ‘proactive partnership’ between academic staff and the library and a desire for further development of information skills work with students. The results of the Customer Value Discovery research, combined with the reorganisation that was taking place within the university’s schools and colleges – which in itself necessitated a realignment of the library’s customer-facing organisational structure – encouraged LLR to undertake a major restructuring of the site-based information teams responsible for academic liaison.

The academic liaison team (ALT) was formed in January 2006, creating a team of liaison librarians aligned with lecturers, and with comparable value and professionalism. The primary focus

of the new team would be the development of proactive links and liaison with academic staff and, although the new structure established a named contact for all subject areas and introduced an academic liaison team manager (ALTM) for each of the four university colleges, this was to be embedded within a single team approach to support collaborative working with the academic community.

One of the central elements within the new structure was the introduction of university-wide remits for the ALTMs. This has ensured that ALT activities are aligned with NTU's strategic plan, research plan and institutional learning and teaching enhancement strategy (ILTES), and provides accountability at a senior level for the development of four key service areas: enquiry and reference services; information literacy; research support; and widening participation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACADEMIC LIAISON TEAM

In an attempt to provide further detail to the high-level strategy of the new team, an 'ALT away day' was organised and an online survey of the expectations of academic staff at NTU was undertaken. At the away day, the team identified that time spent on non-value-added tasks (such as bibliographic checking and desk-bound enquiry support) was restricting our capacity to develop new ways of working with academic staff. The away day helped to crystallise the cultural shift within the team and our commitment to proactive liaison, while also recognising that new initiatives would require a different skills-set, with greater emphasis on pedagogic skills, advocacy and project management and increased engagement with emerging technologies, including Web 2.0.

Using information gathered from the away day and the academic staff survey, an ALT action plan was created that provided the team with a clear vision of its priorities and an acknowledgement of the new competencies of the liaison librarians. For example, it is now an expectation within the ALT that a liaison librarian will have acquired the postgraduate certificate in higher education (PGCHE) within three years of appointment – a move that has increased individuals' confidence and helped the team interact as equals with the academic community. The action plan was based around the ALTM remits and placed high emphasis on initiatives such as embedding information literacy within the curriculum, development of eLearning support and value-adding activity such as establishing library resources within the uni-

versity's new virtual learning environment (VLE), improving academic staff's information skills and providing proactive assistance in developing and keeping academics' reading lists up to date – all areas that are reflected in the higher-order LLR operational plan. To achieve the ALT action plan, there would be a much greater emphasis on project work, with members of the team becoming more involved and leading cross-site library groups.

ENQUIRY SUPPORT

Following a review of LLR's front-line enquiry services in 2007, liaison librarians no longer staff front-line information desks; however, higher-level subject-based enquiries are still referred to the ALTs, who are available on a rota basis. The ALT has assumed a new role in training information assistants in the customer-service skills of reference enquiry work, including how to recognise what users really need and identifying key resources to answer their questions.

The introduction of a referral system for complex subject enquiries has reduced the amount of time liaison librarians spend delivering one-to-one front-line services, enabling the ALT to develop a wider, more diverse range of student-support material and to concentrate on the creation of resources designed to meet multiple learning styles and programme-delivery routes, including the new VLE.

The ALT has focussed on trying to help students become more self-sufficient and, as part of this, has introduced new web-based guides (including subject and distance-learning advice), online FAQ lists, self-help information kiosks and podcast and online tours.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

The ALT continues to support the research needs of the university, and has recognised the importance of Gannon-Leary's observation that libraries have to be clear about the services and resources they provide to researchers and then market them proactively and professionally.² The ALT has worked closely with the NTU training and development unit and university research committees to embed an introduction to LLR within the induction programme of all new academic and research staff. This will include a generic school-based induction, covering tools such as RefWorks and Journals Citation Reports, and a package

of one-to-one and group updates on specialist resources for specific discipline areas.

ALT attendance at meetings of university research committees has helped to promote services and resources and raised our profile within the research community. For example, at the request of one of the associate deans for research, and with the expectation that citation analysis would form a major part of the research excellence framework, liaison librarians undertook a comparison of the citation volume and accuracy of the ISI and Scopus databases for papers submitted in the most recent research assessment exercise (RAE). Not only was this an opportunity to add value to NTU's research activity but it was recognition that the professional expertise of the ALT made it best placed to carry out this activity.

The ALT is eager to expand its support for research, and has been heavily involved in the development and advocacy of NTU's new institutional repository (IRep), playing a major part in its publicity, creating web pages and support material and undertaking demonstrations to key university committees and groups. Linked to the introduction of IRep, there is an increasing responsibility on ALT members to act as champions of open access publishing and scholarly communication within NTU, providing advice to the academic community on intellectual property and copyright issues.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The appointment of an ALTM with responsibility for cross-LLR service development in widening participation has provided the ALT with the opportunity to take the lead and review services for those groups that Customer Value Discovery research identified as experiencing the greatest barriers when accessing library services. The ALT has led projects to review existing services for international students on campus, distance learners and students with disabilities, benchmarking provision at other institutions, surveying customers and holding focus groups. As a result, the postal loan service has been extended to include placement students and distance learners as well as disabled students, new guides have been developed for particular groups, the LLR website has been revised and signage has been improved across all libraries.

The involvement of the ALT within the widening participation agenda of the university has had the positive effect of strengthening relationships with

groups outside of LLR such as student support services and the schools, colleges and community outreach services. There has been a significant increase in the work we undertake with prospective students and the ALT is now playing a direct role in the marketing of NTU. Liaison librarians organise specialist promotional/information literacy events for partner colleges and compact students, are present at all NTU open days and take part in orientation events held for mature students.

ELEARNING

NTU identified eLearning as an institutional priority in its strategic plan for 2004–2010 and the ALT is at the forefront of LLR's efforts to help the university realise its commitment. We are supported in this by the existence of the educational development unit (EDU), which was established in October 2005 and is situated within the LLR organisational structure alongside the ALT. The EDU concentrates on promoting the integration of eLearning technologies within the curriculum, providing support for academics in curriculum design and in their use of the VLE.

The ALT and EDU work in partnership to encourage academics to include eLearning as one of their methods of course delivery. ALT's involvement in the academic quality-assurance cycle means we are aware of new course provision at the earliest stages of curriculum design and can identify opportunities for the EDU to assist academics. Liaison librarians have been involved in the development of the university's first fully online degree, an MSc in biomedical science, facilitating student use of LLR services and resources.

The VLE presents new opportunities for the ALT as a learning space in terms of providing access to information resources and embedding information literacy training within the curriculum. We have also assumed responsibility for training all first-year students in the use of the VLE during induction. Liaison librarians provide front-line support for students in their use of eLearning and have an essential role to play in ensuring that the customer feedback received at course committees and training sessions is used to inform future VLE and eLearning developments.

INFORMATION LITERACY

In support of NTU's ILTES, LLR aims to enable students to develop relevant information literacy skills and to become independent learners;

academic and support staff to develop specific information literacy skills required to support their work; and NTU graduates to be information-literate. The ILTES states that 'information literacy skills need to be embedded in year one programmes and to be considered routinely in the planning of course provision' by 2010. The current developments of an online module and information literacy policy are important steps in meeting this objective. The ALT actively engages with academic staff across NTU at programme, college and institutional levels and liaison librarians are now members of schools' learning and teaching committees.

Increasingly, we are adopting a team-teaching approach to delivering information literacy, which allows the ALT to respond to the growth in student numbers and exposes us to innovative practice within the schools by making us aware of different pedagogic styles. The ALT continues to develop a portfolio of lectures, workshops and sessions linked to coursework and programme assessment criteria. The ALT is beginning to explore the potential of Web 2.0 within the context of information literacy, and we are working with the EDU to create eLearning objects that can be delivered through the VLE and accessed by students at their convenience. Tools such as the Camtasia Studio Screen recording software are being used by liaison librarians to record voiceovers for PowerPoint presentations, and one school has introduced a dissertation-preparation activity on the VLE discussion board, where students have the opportunity to play an 'ask the expert' card, with their liaison librarian being one of several experts within the course team.

Although the embedding of information literacy into the curriculum is a high priority for the ALT, we have introduced a number of new initiatives, including Podcast and virtual tours to support induction and a programme of events with online booking via the LLR web site. The events are open to all staff and students at the university and cover topics such as referencing, specific databases and the VLE. They have enabled us to better deploy the subject expertise within the team to our customers, exposing them to a wider range of information resources and reaching students who currently do not have information literacy provision within their curriculum.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND THE USE OF MARKET INTELLIGENCE

The ALT still plays an active role in supporting internal reviews and accreditation visits, provid-

ing written reports, information packs, tours and so on, but the new team has tried to develop a more explicit role within the academic quality assurance cycle and processes, and to clarify our status within the validation, review and reporting process. ALT representation at this level formalises our relationships with academics, encourages a more equal partnership and ensures that our agenda is aligned to that of the schools. Rather than operating in isolation, the ALT has been able to establish meaningful partnerships with the university's quality and learning and teaching enhancement groups to develop university-wide policies and practices on issues that transcend LLR, such as plagiarism, copyright and accessibility compliance, reading lists, information literacy and eLearning. Attendance at school and course committees also provides another forum for eliciting customer feedback, which informs the development of new services and contributes to the culture of customer service excellence within LLR. The ALT represents all of LLR in the quality-assurance process so it has strengthened cross-service relationships.

ALT activity is driven by feedback gathered during Customer Value Research and the quality-assurance process, making us front-runners in the application of market intelligence within LLR. Increasingly, the ALT is leading Customer Value Research projects, such as LibQUAL+, and we have used a variety of approaches to obtain customer feedback, including surveys and focus groups. ALT-commissioned research is extremely important, as it allows us to disseminate findings to other teams within LLR, influence their operational activities and be a better advocate for our customers.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The introduction of a new library management system and a centralised ordering process within LLR has helped to reduce the time that liaison librarians spend on routine activity such as reading-list checking and book-ordering. There is now a much greater emphasis on the development of proactive partnerships between the ALT and the academic community in providing and developing high-quality information resources to support teaching, learning and research, and liaison librarians have been able to devote more time to value-added activity such as the provision of proactive assistance to academic staff in developing and keeping reading lists up to date (including current-awareness services for new resources). In addition to this, the ALT now

supplies guidance on copyright compliance and advises academic staff on digitisation procedures, offering alternative resources where necessary.

The ALT will continue to play an active role in the development and management of the collection, and is still heavily engaged in a five-year stock-management cycle and an annual journals review, all of which is underpinned by an information resources policy. The development of the e-resource collection is an increasingly important activity for the ALT, and as the links between the ALT, EDU and the academic community increase, our role within the collection-development process is likely to expand to include the management of learning resources as well as information resources.

CONCLUSION

There has been a considerable change in the focus and direction of the ALT following the redefinition of our role in January 2006. This has been reflected in the competencies required by the liaison librarians and, although subject knowledge and familiarity with a range of relevant information resources continue to be important, there is now a much greater emphasis on proactivity and the need for excellent interpersonal, negotiation, project management and, increasingly, pedagogic skills. Will we need to go further and develop the technical knowledge and skills of the learning technologists and educational developers to thrive? As McKnight points out,³ in the foreseeable future the answer is much more likely to be about liaison librarians working in tandem with such professionals within multi-skilled course development teams.

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- 2 See P. Gannon-Leary, M. Bent, and J. Webb, 2008, 'A destination or a place of last resort? The research library of the future, its users and its librarians', *Library and information research*, 32 (101), 2008, pp 3–14
- 3 S. McKnight, 'The changing nature of academic libraries', in M. Beaudoin, ed., *Perspectives on higher education in the digital age*, Hauppauge NY: Nova Science Pub Inc, 2006, pp 63–76

Academic support at Leeds Metropolitan Library



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AN AWARD-WINNING LIBRARY ACADEMIC SUPPORT TEAM

Leeds Metropolitan's library academic support stream is made up of academic librarians and information services librarians who provide academic support to the university's six faculties.

The team uses innovative methods of working together to engage students and enhance their experience. The team was only formed a year ago so this is a good time to reflect on our success so far.

The library service at Leeds Met is continually developing and offers new challenges and opportunities for staff who provide library academic support. Innovation has even become part of our new name – ‘Libraries and Learning Innovation’. We still offer all the traditional types of library academic support, but there is an increasing emphasis on finding innovative ways of supporting students and publicising what we can offer.

This year the library academic support stream won a university ‘Attitude, character and talents’ award for ‘Future Focus’, a strategic priority for Leeds Metropolitan staff.

COMMUNICATION AND SHARING

We are based on two sites but it is important that we work as one team. We have changed the way we communicate by developing a wiki, which acts as a repository for learning objects, teaching resources and a place to share best practice. Through it we share and discuss ideas, information and materials for the three key areas on which we have been primarily concentrating – teaching and learning, research support and information literacy. Each of these areas has a group within the stream leading that area, though all members of the stream can contribute to all three areas. All three groups use the wiki to share information and resources relating to the different interest groups, and this ensures we have a more holistic approach to these differing strands.

The wiki includes a resource bank, online training materials (with comments on how they can be used), tips, links to other resources, planning proformas, evaluation forms and examples of best practice. Use of this wiki has dramatically increased the sharing of information and ideas amongst the team’s members and has generated a wealth of new ideas.

As well as communication within the stream, we are always looking for opportunities to promote what we can offer to a wider audience; most recently have been involved in the first library festival, a week-long extravaganza of activities to promote the library. We hosted an information literacy session led by Moira Bent, national teaching fellow from Newcastle University, ran workshops

for university staff and students and held drop-in sessions promoting chosen databases of the week.

INTERACTIVE, MULTIMEDIA INFORMATION SOURCES

We are updating our subject web pages with innovative and interactive content to make them more dynamic, including using Intute, a service which evaluates websites and keeps hyperlinks kept up to date, and also provides RSS feed to alert users to new relevant websites. We have recorded videos to replace text information, and incorporated quizzes and tutorials.

We have created interactive online tutorials to embed into the curriculum to supplement face-to-face teaching and ensure that all students have access to the information at point of need and can learn at their own pace. Members of the team have learned how to use the various kinds of software required, including Flash and Captivate. They have also created database training materials using Informs to create tutorials where students can work through a live search on the database with the backup of tutorial help online alongside it.

We have been working with academic staff to embed information literacy into the curriculum and to encourage them to use the tutorials and materials we have created. We have been successful in asking staff to invite us to contribute to their modules on the VLE.

The team is also investigating Camtasia, which allows incorporating video, quizzes and other interactive media into subject web pages.

INFORMATION SKILLS RESEARCH

Building on the work of various information literacy initiatives over the previous academic year, members of the team have been successful in a bid for funding from the university’s teaching quality enhancement fund (TQEF), to research best practice in information literacy teaching and use this to enhance the teaching of information skills at the university.

The fund offers staff opportunities to run projects designed to enhance the quality of the student experience. We plan to liaise with colleagues at other institutions to find out what techniques they use to teach information skills. We will use this to inform our own practice and enable us to build on the strategies we already developed. The TQEF money will be used to fund colleagues’ attend-

ance at the LILAC conference in April 2009 and for visits to other institutions, primarily Cardiff University.

In addition to networking with colleagues we are reviewing the latest research on how information skills are currently being embedded into the curriculum. This is being carried out in conjunction with a student who is completing an MSc in information studies at Leeds Met. The literature review is providing invaluable insights into the current position of information skills teaching in higher education today. We are due to complete the project in May 2009 and plan to publicise our findings through Leeds Met's in-house publication, *The assessment, learning and teaching journal*.

INFORMATION SKILLS IN YOUR POCKET

We have recently produced a publication called *The little book of information skills*, as an innovative way of presenting information and engaging students in this crucial area, which is one of the top assessment, learning and teaching priorities within the university for the year 2009. *The little book* is aimed at first-year undergraduate students, and so this also addresses another key priority of the university: to enhance the first-year experience. The format is especially accessible and portable and contains hints and tips and a step-by-step approach to good practice in information skills based on SCONUL's 'seven pillars of information literacy'.¹ It follows the seven steps a fictional student takes to find information in the library. Her assignment is to do a presentation on global warming. The book gives examples of how our student conducts her research by following the seven steps.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Research is one of the three key strands of the work of our academic support stream. The research group, jointly chaired by three stream members, was set up with the aim of finding ways to support the Leeds Met research community in informing and refreshing the curriculum. At the outset we identified six key objectives, including improving the ways in which we communicate with our researchers, expanding the training we provide for new researchers and looking at how we can innovate to provide new support or support researchers in different and non-traditional ways. We also wanted to examine how we as librarians could contribute to the university's research output.

An initial brainstorming session was held to identify the key issues, involving all members of the stream. The chair of the group also undertook a review of the literature and looked at how other university libraries support their researchers. These reviews have started to identify best practice and we intend to follow up by contacting colleagues in other institutions in order to gain further insights. We have also audited our existing provision and designed a questionnaire which will be sent to all researchers to identify what they need from our services and how they think we can improve.

Members of the stream delivered workshops to promote the library to research-award supervisors during the university's assessment, learning and teaching day at the staff-development festival in September 2008, and two stream members have had articles published in the university's *Assessment, learning and teaching journal*, which encourages new researchers to write about their work.

Of course the work of the research group overlaps with the other two interests of the academic support stream: teaching and learning and information literacy. Future initiatives will involve working closely together.

The Research Information Network (RIN) report (2007)² identifies the need for researchers and librarians to engage in dialogue to ensure the most effective use of library services and librarians' expertise. The aim of the academic support stream's research group is to maintain and improve this dialogue in our institution.

FLEXIBLE SPACES

Library spaces at both sites have been reconfigured to enable flexible learning and teaching, transforming us 'from a traditional library to an innovative, flexible, student-centred library for the twenty-first century'.³ We now have teaching spaces in the library with different types of furniture for different kinds of working. There are comfortable seats with coffee tables, office chairs on casters and tables of different sizes and shapes that are easy to move around and arrange in a variety of ways. As a result of this, our teaching can be much more flexible. In a recent workshop on research skills, we organised the participants into teams, thus introducing a competitive element to the session, which engaged the learners and created a lot of fun and rapport. Each team had a slightly different task to complete and was equipped with a wireless laptop. The emphasis of

the workshop was on interactive learning, and the layout of the furniture facilitated this.

The ground floor of one of our libraries is now a huge group-study area, and librarians sometimes use the space to hold meetings. It is an inviting and comfortable space, as well as being wireless-enabled. One of the benefits of holding meetings in the open area is that other members of staff from different streams will often pass by and show interest in what we are doing. This informally enables the exchange of ideas and encourages cross-stream communication.

THE FUTURE

In December 2008 the team will have had its first away day. Part of the day will be taken up in looking at individual strengths and what they can contribute to the team, and part will be doing some brainstorming and forward planning for the coming year, in line with the university's 'vision and character' statement.

Something we will be investigating in the near future is the use of Elluminate as a web-conferencing tool to further enhance cross-site communication amongst our team.

Communicating and working in partnerships with library staff within the regional university network will be another project. The library at Leeds Met works in partnership with the 23 colleges of the regional university network to open up library services and add value to the experience of students and staff in the network. We hope to work with them to enhance information literacy provision in their institutions and learn from their practices.

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Changing times: the changing role of assistant librarians in DIT's Aungier St library



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INTRODUCTION

*'They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom.'*¹

Change is a fact of life in all professions, but subject librarians could be forgiven for thinking that they experience particularly high levels of change in terms of technology, resources and job description, even over a relatively short period of time.

In 2004, I joined Dublin Institute of Technology's (DIT's) Aungier St library, the largest of the seven libraries (plus the central services unit) that make up DIT library services. Aungier St library serves the students and staff of the business faculty, and some departments within applied arts. I became one of a team of three assistant librarians who report to the faculty librarian, who manages the library.

Even since that relatively recent time, my role, and that of my colleagues, has changed quite significantly. In particular, we have moved from providing 'user education' to 'information literacy', and have therefore had to acquire new skills and enhance existing ones. This article examines the shift in our role, the reasons behind the change and the skills that we consider necessary to allow us to fulfil our new role.

THE OLD DAYS: 2004

When I joined DIT library services in 2004 my job description included subject specialisation, liaison with academic staff, shifts at the library's information, issue and reception desks, development and delivery of focussed user-education programmes

to various levels of students and staff, dealing with in-depth information queries, managing staff, writing user guides and committee work – in other words, the wide range of responsibilities with which most subject librarians are familiar. Even at that time, however, user education was considered by my colleagues to be perhaps the most important of our duties, and there was considerable interest in and enthusiasm for user-education activities among them. The library's involvement in user-education activities had already increased greatly since its relocation in 2002 to a new, bigger library which was equipped with a training room with 25 student computers.

'Training sessions' (as they were then termed) generally fell into two broad categories: basic library-induction sessions and advanced courses for second- to final- year students and for postgraduate students. The library induction was a one-hour session comprising a tour of the library and an introduction to the library website and the catalogue. This session was offered to new undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The advanced session usually lasted one and a half to two hours and covered devising a search strategy, Boolean operators, the library catalogue, databases, electronic journals, evaluating information, plagiarism, copyright and referencing and citing. This session was offered to second- to final-year students, and to postgraduate students.

We generally provided both the induction and advanced training sessions in response to requests from lecturers, and covered whatever topics were requested by those lecturers. Our sessions were rarely integrated into the students' academic courses: a fairly typical scenario, traditionally, for academic libraries' user-education programmes.²

As can be seen from the above descriptions, in 2004 our philosophy was to cover as much as possible in the short period of time we had with students, since we could never be sure when or if we would get another opportunity to train them again. While very welcome, these occasional opportunities to instruct students were completely dependent on individual academic staff members requesting a library session, and were not conducive to truly integrating IL into academic programmes – a point also made by McGuinness.³

FAST FORWARD TO 2008

My job description now, as with most subject librarians, consists of 'the old job ... plus',⁴ with

particular emphasis on increased information literacy (IL) and additional liaison activities. A typical day can include teaching several IL classes, liaising with academic staff members about currently existing or future embedded IL modules and arranging staff to cover upcoming IL classes, in addition to answering in-depth information queries (now online, as well as at the information desk or by phone), supervising staff and overseeing the library's journal subscriptions.

My Aungier St colleagues and I now teach eight embedded IL modules to students in the business and applied arts faculties, and last year (2007/08) we were responsible for assessing the IL component of projects completed by students of two academic programmes. We have produced and publicised a menu of the range of IL classes we offer and we liaise with our academic colleagues to devise the most suitable combination of IL classes to meet the desired learning outcomes. We feel that the shift from library sessions that were largely independent of the academic courses pursued by students to fully integrated IL modules that are linked directly with projects assigned by our academic colleagues has had a range of positive effects, in addition to the obvious benefits to our students. The additional contact between librarians and academic staff members that coordinating an integrated IL module requires has raised the library's profile among academic staff and has forged strong and lasting relationships between us.

WHAT HAPPENED?

Since user education was already considered to be of considerable importance in the library, it is interesting to examine the reasons behind this shift in emphasis from librarians being responsible for a range of duties, including user education, to librarians as teachers first and library staff second.

This change was brought about by several factors, including the introduction of our first integrated information studies module in 2004/05; librarians gaining teaching qualifications; a reduction in subject librarians' desk duties; and DIT library services' information literacy project (in the summer of 2007).

First integrated module

The first seed of change was sown in the 2004/05 academic year by the introduction of the library's first module to be integrated into an academic programme: the BSc in accounting and finance.

This course was made possible by the support of an 'academic champion', the most common means by which librarians achieve the integration of IL into academic courses.⁵ The course was entitled 'Information and communication studies' and was comprised of three elements: information technology, information studies and communication studies. Five European credit transfer credits were allocated to the information studies component of the course, which was taught by librarians over seven contact hours.

Having witnessed the benefits to students of a seven-hour, integrated module rather than a single two-hour class, we sought to extend embedded information studies modules into additional academic programmes. In 2005/06 we added a six-hour information studies course for the BSc in management and law students, which followed a similar format to that of the BSc in accounting and finance course.

Learning and teaching qualifications

In tandem with the introduction of the library's first embedded IL modules, several librarians throughout DIT, including Aungier St, completed the postgraduate certificate in third-level learning and teaching offered by DIT's learning and teaching centre. Some librarians subsequently completed a master's degree. The enhanced pedagogic skills acquired by these librarians have naturally influenced the design and content of the library's IL classes. The completion by subject librarians of these courses has also had additional, more intangible benefits. It has served as an opportunity for subject librarians to meet and collaborate with DIT's academic staff members and, perhaps more importantly, has encouraged academic staff members to view librarians as teachers, and as peers.

Reduction in desk duties

More mundane factors have also contributed to the change in the assistant librarians' role in Aungier St library. In the last two years we have reduced the number of hours per week that subject librarians spend at the library's service desks. In 2004, subject librarians did several shifts per week at the library's reception desk and issue desk, in addition to the information desk. Now we no longer work at the reception or issue desks (except on our one late night per week) and library assistants and senior library assistants have been trained to handle most information queries. This change not only offers us more time to design, develop and prepare IL classes, but it has also resulted in a fundamental shift in how

our library colleagues see us and our role, and indeed in how we perceive it ourselves.

Information literacy project

The second major milestone in our journey from 'user education' to 'information literacy', however, was DIT library services' information literacy project. In 2007 I was seconded to the project for three months in the summer. One of my tasks was to design a generic, adaptable IL pilot module, to be marketed for inclusion in academic programmes in each faculty. Following a survey of and meetings with subject and faculty librarians throughout DIT library services, and visits and correspondence with other academic institutions in Ireland, I designed a new approach to IL for the library. This approach involves the use of a generic module consisting of a menu of eleven one-hour classes:

- Finding books
- Finding journal articles from their citations
- Developing a search strategy and using it in a library database
- Specialised databases (e.g. legal databases)
- Effective internet searching and evaluating information
- Plagiarism and referencing and citing
- Introduction to Endnote
- Intermediate Endnote
- Advanced Endnote
- Current awareness
- Citation searching and using journal citation reports.

Each class is designed to be one hour long, and each class can be offered independently of the others. The menu provides a description of the type of classes the library offers to students, together with learning outcomes, and gives academics and librarians a choice of options from which they can select the most appropriate elements for the students in question.

This approach has been used successfully in other libraries, including the University College Dublin library,⁶ and has several advantages. Firstly, rather than placing the emphasis on covering as much material as possible in a one- or two-hour period it instead allows the librarian to cover one topic well. Secondly, it advertises the range of topics on which the library can provide instruction. Thirdly, the module descriptors are written in a style and using a vocabulary familiar to academic staff members. Finally, it allows academic staff and librarians to work together to talk about the learning outcomes they wish a particular group

of students to achieve, and to choose the relevant class(es) to achieve that outcome.

This module (with some modifications) has been used as the template for all IL classes offered by Aungier St subject librarians since 2007/08. Following the introduction of this module, demand for embedded IL modules increased greatly, with an increase from two to seven embedded modules between 2006/07 and 2007/08 in Aungier Street library alone, and even more embedded modules coming on stream in the current academic year. These additional teaching activities have also helped considerably in our liaison roles, since the additional, regular contact with our academic colleagues has allowed us to develop our relationships with them.

SKILLS NEEDED

We find that the changes in our role mean that we need new or enhanced skills in a range of areas. The increasingly integrated nature of our information literacy classes means that we must have good teaching skills. Not only must we have these skills (which may be innate), but we must also be able to demonstrate 'an understanding of the learning process' (p. 231)⁷ and be able to communicate with our academic colleagues using 'mutually understood language'.⁸ Having subject librarians with qualifications in third-level learning and teaching has helped us to achieve this goal, as have special workshops provided by DIT's learning and teaching centre.

Our additional liaison activities also require that we develop our networking, marketing and communication skills, all of which are widely recognised in the literature as being particularly important strengths for subject librarians to have in order to fulfil their changing role.⁹ These skills are quite intangible, but can be developed through attending staff-training and development courses provided by DIT and by organisations such as the academic and national library training co-operative.

CONCLUSION

Subject librarians' role and functions change at a rapid rate, as our experience in Aungier St library indicates. I believe that this change makes our job more interesting and challenging, and allows us to use skills that we may not even have previously realised that we had. Hopefully Confucius' words will ring true, and the frequent changes that we

experience will also help us to achieve both happiness and wisdom!

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S.O.S – Supporting Other Students: the role of student library ambassadors at Southampton Solent University



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Since March 2008, the library at Southampton Solent has been employing a team of students to act as 'library ambassadors'. They provide alternative support to our users, particularly during periods when library staff are not on duty, such as during extended opening hours on bank holidays and late evenings. Ambassadors provide peer support covering library facilities and resources, as well as more technical issues (ICT, photocopying, binding). Overall they help to ensure that a high-quality learning environment is accessible throughout our full opening hours.

EXTENDED OPENING HOURS

The library has been under increasing pressure from students to open longer: later in the evening, at weekends, during vacations and at bank holidays. We identified this from frequent comments made on opening hours through our monthly online surveys and our suggestions box scheme. To be able to meet these expectations, the university needed to consider alternative ways of providing access to the library that would not put pressure on existing staff and without incurring high additional costs.

The library had already invested in self-service facilities to allow students to borrow and return library material when there was no staffed loans service available. During 2006/07, the library opened during a few key weeks of the year until



midnight and on three bank holidays, with only security staff present. Feedback from students was generally positive, although they were frustrated when some facilities were not available because of a breakdown or failure during the session; for example, the printers ran out of paper during one evening and the print credit machine became inoperable over one bank holiday, which prevented students from being able to print or photocopy.

PEER STUDENT SUPPORT

As part of a 'learning spaces' project that investigated the future requirements for learning spaces within the university, members of the project team had an opportunity to visit a number of other university libraries. Some of those universities employed students as first-line support for other students needing help and advice whilst studying in the library or learning centres. In particular the University of Warwick's 'learning grid', a high-tech learning environment, is almost entirely operated by students, 24x7. Shortly before the launch of the scheme, members of the team also visited the learning zone at the University of the Arts and spoke to staff about their use of student assistants in running the service.

Feedback from the students on the learning spaces project team suggested that many students who feel nervous about using the full facilities and resources of the library would be more comfortable initially in asking another student for help rather than having to approach a member of the library staff at a help desk. This had already been

proven to be the case, as is evidenced by the success of the LexisNexis student associates at Solent, who provided students with assistance with using this law database. In addition, anecdotal evidence from other universities showed that students who receive well-informed support and advice from other students during their first forays into the library are then more likely to request help from library staff when they need more professional support later in their studies.

EMPLOYING STUDENTS AS LIBRARY AMBASSADORS

The library has for many years employed students to shelve materials. Student shelvers, however, were only trained to shelve materials, although they have often been approached by students asking for help, for example in finding a book.

Following consultation with the students' union and their enthusiastic support for the idea, we set about recruiting a team of student ambassadors. The students were recruited via the university jobshop, which provides internal paid work opportunities to current students. These vacancies range from temporary administrative work to permanent work in a faculty or service.

THE JOB PROFILE

The job profile outlined the role as including the following tasks:

- provide roving, practical support and help to library users and assist them with their use of the library, IT facilities and the copy centre

- during staffed opening hours, to be an additional point of contact for all basic enquiries relating to the use of library services
- make a contribution, outside of normal library staffed hours, by ensuring resources are accessible, functioning and fully stocked (e.g. printers, photocopiers, equipment and so on)
- give guidance in implementing the library and LRC rules and regulations, such as policies on eating and drinking, mobile phone usage
- refer users to the appropriate level of support, depending on the nature of the enquiry and the availability of staff
- carry out regular head counts and obtain and record user feedback when required for evaluation of the service
- help security / caretaking staff with clearing the library at closedown (though responsibility for security of the building rests with security staff / caretakers)
- re-shelve library stock, clear tables and tidy the study areas to ensure a good standard of study environment is maintained
- support students with their use of the library portal, including dealing with general enquires and helping students locate resources through the catalogue and portal pages
- provide help and support with use of the facilities and equipment available and assist students with simple enquiries and troubleshooting, such as for PCs, printers, scanners, copiers, use of wireless system, self-service machines
- communicate any problems or observations to daytime staff via the log or diary provided.

WHAT THE AMBASSADORS DON'T DO FOR THE LIBRARY

We felt it was important to be clear about what we were expecting the ambassadors to do (see job profile above), but also to state what we were *not* asking them to provide. It was important for the ambassadors to be clear about this but also for the library staff to have a clear understanding of their role and how this would differ from that of our permanent staff.

WHAT THEY DON'T DO:

- help with detailed subject or other enquiries that would normally be dealt with by library staff
- provide advice and guidance on the completion of student assignments or help with

their study-skills needs, other than directing users to the relevant section of the library or to printed and online resources via the portal

- diagnose and fix major IT or other systems problems
- access student records and other confidential systems
- use the library management system to issue or return books, other than helping students use the self-service machines
- help students with loans queries (such as blocks on their borrower records) or advise on penalty-points issues, other than through referrals to the relevant staff
- undertake a security or cleaning role for the library building.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

A rigorous selection and interview process was followed, not dissimilar to that used for permanent library posts. The interview questions focused on areas such as:

- previous experience of working in a supportive role in customer services or in an educational setting
- knowledge of the library, including organisation of the stock
- use of the catalogue and library portal pages
- customer services skills and teamworking
- evidence of reliability and responsibility
- knowledge of ICT applications.

Members of the library staff, along with a student union officer, carried out the selection interviews. We initially appointed ten ambassadors and equipped them with distinctive T-shirts and the nautically inspired slogan 'S.O.S. – Supporting Other Students'.

A team of library staff members, including information librarians and the loans supervisors, plus copy centre and ICT staff, contributed to the training programme.

Library ambassadors received a structured programme of training, including both formal training sessions and some shadowing of staff on public desks. They have been encouraged to consider the training they have received and the experience gained from working in the library as helping to develop their transferable skills and therefore helping to enhance their future employability.

CONTENT FOR THE TRAINING PROVIDED TO THE LIBRARY

STUDENT AMBASSADORS:

Training activity	Training by:
Tour of the library – all floors – and pointing out main services, facilities and equipment	Information team
Library regulations silent study and group study areas mobile phones food and drink policy	Information team
Library catalogue types of resources to find using the catalogue how to search and view results accessing ebooks, ejournals and websites checking acquisitions dates (mention 'new books' shelves) logging in to library catalogue renewing books reserving books how many books to borrow	Information team
Finding books on the shelves etc. Dewey checking the returns shelves checking loans-desk trolleys study tables missing books file	Information team /loans team
How to shelve	Loans team
Student logins and passwords for accessing student network	Information team
Athens – logins and passwords	Information team
Library portal logging in to access full information main links to resources, service information and help information	Information team
Self-service machines issuing, returning and renewing books	Loans team
Referring enquiries information librarians and learning resource assistants: who they are and the areas they look after where to find contact details: posters/portal	Information team
Copy centre/IT centre binding photocopying printers (e.g. refilling machines) wireless network scanners	Copy centre team
GPAS (printing and copy system) – adding credit to accounts	Copy centre team
ICT facilities software student image printing	IT centre staff
Library data collection head counts	Loans team
Help contacts MyCourse – ambassadors site IT help options FAQs issue desk/enquiry desk contact details staff contacts for subject or service-specific enquiries	Information team
Health and safety – lifting and handling (DVD), safety on leaving the building at night	Loans team
Customer services skills	All teams

CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THE AMBASSADORS

Following the initial training we realised that it was important to continue to support the team. So that they would have a ready source of information, we developed a library ambassadors site on MyCourse, the Solent virtual learning environment. This area provides a forum for us to communicate with them and vice versa. The site includes practical information such as current rotas, where to get help, access to previous training materials and links to further information. To date the site has been well used as a resource by the team.

The aim is also to provide regular update sessions with the ambassadors, an example being a recent training session provided about our new library catalogue, which has been introduced as part of the library's implementation of a new library management system.

LINKS TO THE 'REAL WORK' PROJECT

The 'ambassadors' project also has close links to a wider university initiative called 'real work', which is being run by the university careers and jobshop team. This aims to bring a structured approach to the employment of students by the university and will include developing more formal recruitment procedures and interviews, along with guidelines, and handbooks. The library will in future benefit from such generic training materials as those on customer-service skills or health and safety, which to date the library has had to develop on its own, specifically for the ambassadors.

AN AMBASSADOR'S VIEW

Finally, how do our library ambassadors view their role? Ayla Iskender, one of our ambassadors and a journalism student, comments:

What does it mean to be a student library ambassador? Well our primary role is to 'Support Other Students - S.O.S' (as is stated on the ambassador T-shirts). We help with anything from issuing a book on the self-service machines to helping to locate a book. By introducing the library ambassadors, the library can stay open later Monday to Thursday, which of course benefits the students who need to use the facilities. The library can be open on bank holidays now, which proved immensely popular during hand-in time last term, with hundreds of students turning up to a packed library - the four hours of being open was not long enough! Every shift we help at least one person and if

we were not there the students would not have the help or have access to the much needed facilities the library has to offer.'

CONCLUSION

The library ambassadors have proved to be an important development for the library, helping us to provide extended opening hours throughout the academic year. We are already looking to recruit our new team to continue to provide this essential peer support to users for the academic years ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks go to Elizabeth Selby for her development of the original project plan and to the rest of the team (ambassadors and library staff) for their help and enthusiasm with developing this project.

The evolving information professional: the changing role of the Open University subject librarian



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In this article we examine the way in which the Open University (OU) has changed over the last couple of decades, and what that has meant for the OU library and its impact on the subject librarian role. We will reflect on some of the external influences which have led to change, and draw on the experiences of staff to analyse the skills required then and now. We end with a look to the future.

At its inception the OU was doing something quite revolutionary by offering a university education to those who had missed out on this opportunity. For many years, students were sent everything they needed for their course 'in the box', with no requirement to read beyond course materials; indeed this was actively discouraged. There were of course also the famous night-time television broadcasts and – to give students a taste of campus life – residential schools. At this time library services were offered only to the relatively small community of campus and regional-office-

based academic staff responsible for writing OU courses.

The great leap forward came in the mid-1990s. Widening internet access and new leadership at the OU library resulted in a service being offered to students for the first time. In 2000 the OU library's website, providing access to online collections, was launched. Alongside these developments in technology and management came changes in approaches to learning and teaching, with moves in UK higher education towards more independent and resource-based learning. Now at the OU new course models are being developed. Students are increasingly expected to research outside their course materials and to develop key skills – including information literacy – for life and work. All courses now have a course website on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

In order to understand how working practices have changed over the last couple of decades, we compared the pre-1995 role with the current situation. We have illustrated this with two case studies of library staff.

CASE STUDY 1 – LEARNING AND TEACHING LIBRARIAN TEAM LEADER, EXPERIENCED MEMBER OF STAFF

In order to understand the journey travelled by OU library subject librarians, we talked to a long-standing member of OU staff, who has worked at the OU library for over 25 years, first as a subject specialist and more recently managing a team of library staff supporting two faculties.

There have been a number of changes in that time. When our interviewee joined, subject librarians, known as liaison librarians, worked with faculties and course teams based at the OU's headquarters in Milton Keynes and with regional-office staff, but not with students or their tutors, now known as associate lecturers. The main role of librarians was to help individual academics find relevant material to support course-writing and also their own writing, but research was not supported. Librarians would attend course-team meetings, read drafts of course material and comment on them. They would also write detailed printed library guides for students to explain how to search for and find information using other – mainly public – libraries.

Other key duties were picture research and current awareness. Picture research required librarians to track down illustrations and clear rights for them to be used in courses, as well as liaising

with the design studio on behalf of academic staff wanting new illustrations. Current awareness involved scanning printed sources for subject information relevant to each faculty, followed by a large amount of copying, cutting and sticking on the part of the library assistants. Librarians would become highly specialised in their subject areas, building up an in-depth knowledge of the relevant information sources. Electronic searches for information using dial-up sources were mediated by library experts.

Initially everything – both information sources and information management systems – was print-based (although some databases were available on CD-ROM) and procedures were decidedly manual. The workplace was structured hierarchically, with a clear divide between professional and non-professional staff. Until the arrival of word processors, it would be unthinkable for professional staff to do their own typing; instead, secretaries would type letters.

Compared to now, there was far more face-to-face and telephone contact with library users, although the community served by the library was mainly local and very much smaller. One-to-one inductions for new academic staff were carried out, but not group training sessions for staff or students. Overall, it is probably true to say that there were fewer external pressures driving the work of subject librarians at the OU library.

Necessary competencies included subject knowledge and expertise, searching skills (for printed and later CD-ROM sources), negotiation and influencing skills and the ability to communicate well verbally and in writing. Nowadays – as well as management responsibilities – presentation skills, IT fluency and a knowledge of the latest technology have been added to this portfolio of skills. Our case-study subject is one of the library champions for Digilab, the OU library's creative space for exploring the potential of new technologies in learning and teaching, and works extensively with Moodle, the OU's VLE.

CASE STUDY 2 – LEARNING AND TEACHING LIBRARIAN, NEW MEMBER OF STAFF

The following thoughts have been provided by a member of staff in his first professional post who has been working at the OU library for just two years. He has a dual role: working with courses and programmes for the faculties supported by his team and liaising with suppliers of online sub-

scription resources. This includes troubleshooting when there are access problems. Other minor roles include taking a turn on the OU library helpdesk to answer queries from students and staff, delivering training and helping to implement new library systems.

It took this interviewee at least 18 months to feel confident in his position. This was due to there being a lot to learn, working across two different, but closely related, teams within the library. He has become a jack of many trades, but also an expert at a few and this has meant learning several new skills.

He has to understand different perspectives in relation to those he liaises with: for example, being able to see from the perspective of students, academics and resource suppliers in order to represent the other two, depending on who he is communicating with.

He has had to learn to teach effectively in order to deliver sessions to various user groups and has both drawn on his experiences as a student and learned from colleagues in order to do this.

He has built up knowledge of the nuts and bolts of various IT-based library tools, such as IP authentication, Athens, Shibboleth, an OpenURL resolver and a federated search engine. He thinks it will become increasingly important for librarians to understand the technologies underpinning our services in order to assist users effectively.

Flexibility and adaptability have been important: 'It is almost as if, as a librarian, being a highly competent generalist, able to turn your hand to a multiplicity of tasks, is more important than having considerable knowledge relating to any particular discipline.'

Finally, he feels it is essential that librarians are confident with all aspects of the online environment, from Academic Search Complete to Wikipedia, and from the extant tools of Web 2.0 to the potentials of Web 3.0, because in future the lines between these resources and tools are only going to become more blurred, to the extent that students of the now will just consider them all to be synonymous with 'the internet'. He is hopeful, though, that all students (be they under 16 or over 60) will, through the efforts of librarians and other educators, understand some of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the tools and resources available to them.

He does not believe in the homogeneity of the 'net generation' but, as somebody born outside it who shares many of its characteristics, he does believe that it is a movement which education needs to take into consideration. To this effect he thinks librarians need to enable themselves to be seen, by academics and students alike, as being 'savvy travellers' in the technological world,¹ but not by contributing to the moral panic of jumping on the 'digital native' bandwagon.²

What are the differences between then and now? One key change highlighted in the case studies is the shift in role from subject specialist to generalist, from keeper and controller of information to information manager and facilitator of access.

Nowadays, the internet makes information available to anyone who cares to use it, and the emphasis in libraries is on the development of information literacy skills: helping our users to do things for themselves rather than doing it for them. This is both an opportunity for the OU, which has always enthusiastically embraced the latest technology, and also a threat if we find that our users are bypassing library resources completely in favour of Google. One key aspect of our work, therefore, is to build online resources and skills into OU courses; another strategy is to ensure that our resources can be found and linked to via Google Scholar.

We still need good communication, negotiating and influencing skills. Promotion and advocacy are critical: there is no room for complacency in assuming that people will understand the value of our services and come to us. The experience of librarians at Bangor and other institutions has acted as a warning to library managers across the land.³ Web 2.0 tools offer an opportunity to go out to users and to meet them where they are. The OU library has a growing Facebook community, and social networking tools such as Twitter and Ning are also being embraced.

With the amount of information available increasing all the time, librarians still need searching skills but these days it is impossible to know everything. Instead, the emphasis is on a more generalist set of skills and we rely on colleagues to help us out. There is an ever-present requirement for us to keep up to date with the digital environment.

Regarding OU course-writing, we need to be aware of course learning outcomes, but may be less involved with the detailed content. The

timescale for producing courses has become much tighter, and will become faster still in order for the OU to stay ahead in the current political and financial climate. One strategy is to produce generic resources and learning objects that can easily be adapted to particular course contexts. In our case, these will focus on information literacy (IL) as a key skill. We will use any means possible – online or face-to-face – to convey IL skills to our users. In the last year or so the library has started using web conferencing software to deliver training sessions to remote users, and this is proving popular.

Nowadays, we type our own e-mail messages, arrange meetings and write up notes ourselves. One consequence of this is that we talk less on the phone with people and have less face-to-face contact. However, Web 2.0 has led to an interesting shift in workplace communication. Alongside the blurring of boundaries between roles (with technical know-how often being as important as a librarianship qualification) has come a subtle challenge to traditional hierarchical structures. The informal conversations on Twitter and Facebook can bypass the organisational structure by allowing like-minded individuals to share information quickly on topics of current interest. We are also aware of the way in which the 'social knowing'⁴ of collaborative tools such as wikis and social bookmarking can enable learners to construct knowledge collectively as well as individually.

Compared to our faculty colleagues, we are highly skilled and confident in the digital environment. Duncan's hybrid role as subject librarian and resource troubleshooter illustrates the fact that our understanding of publishers, licensing and the business of information is of key significance. This is starting to be more widely known and valued by academic colleagues. Relationships with faculty academic staff are still important, but liaison also now extends to technical, media and rights colleagues. New models of course-production are starting to involve successful collaboration between a number of key players, including the library.

These days we are highly aware of the political environment, and the national student survey has raised the stakes when it comes to student satisfaction with our services. The quality of the student experience has to be at the heart of what we do. In the future the OU is likely to be dealing with more first-time younger students – those categorised as the 'net generation'. They will most likely have expectations of finding things fast, and

may well be used to creating their own systems of categorising information.

How will our skills stand up in the future? A quick scan of the literature suggests that, although some studies have been done in the US, there is more investigation to be done in this area for the UK. Corrall and Hardy draw the rather cautious conclusion from their research into the roles, relationships and competencies of subject librarians that 'The findings suggest that subject librarians are still fulfilling a useful role in the web-based environment, but further research is needed to substantiate such claims and refute counter arguments'.⁵

We would go further and say that subject librarians at the OU have a vital link with library users, acting as the human face of the digital library and also as a key marketing tool which should be fully exploited. We are used to working in an environment of constant change and are well placed to adapt to new roles. Today we are called 'learning and teaching librarians' but in future our titles may differ to reflect newer roles. Workforce development plans are in place to ensure future-proofing of our skills and competencies.

In a recent article on how the younger generation are changing the way we work, Don Tapscott writes: 'The net generation possess the skills to win in this world. Look at how they work, and you'll see what it takes to succeed in these challenging times.'⁶ It is our contention that librarians at the OU also possess these skills and are well placed to take a leading role as the Open University embraces the challenges and opportunities of education in the 21st century.

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The changing nature of subject liaison at St Mary's University College, Twickenham



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There has been much interest recently in the changing relationship of current and future student populations with university library services, as a result of the huge technological advances made in IT in the past decade. The generation of 'digital natives' now entering the higher education system have significantly different experience and expectations from those who have come before.¹ This is already evident in the student population at St Mary's University College, Twickenham, where staff are observing students arriving with a high level of technological familiarity but with less confidence in finding and evaluating information. Such changes have a considerable impact on the nature of subject liaison locally and this article discusses some of the ways in which the nature of the 'subject librarian' role is shifting to maintain relevancy in the current environment.

OUR CHANGING USER POPULATION

Many of the changes being experienced at St Mary's are common to the sector as a whole, and are the result of broader social changes. The permeation of technology, and especially informa-

tion technology, into everyday life has proceeded rapidly in the last decade and a half. This is especially true in the case of online communication, as most students now entering university have grown up with broadband internet access as a fundamental part of their lives. As was uncovered by the 'Google Generation' study,² this does not necessarily mean that they have become expert at retrieving and evaluating online information. In fact, they show a tendency to rely heavily on search engines, often lacking the patience for searching multiple library databases.³ There is a general perception that academic libraries need to continue to adapt their services to match this new reality of information-searching behaviour. The user experience of online library tools in many cases still lags behind the current generation of Web 2.0-enabled commercial services, and this seems to be discouraging students from viewing libraries and other institutional online services as their first port of call for information.

BACKGROUND TO OUR SERVICES

These issues are already impacting on services at St Mary's University College. St Mary's is a small teaching-oriented higher education institution, with just under four thousand students. It specialises in several distinct areas, including education/teacher training, sport and exercise science and performing arts, and has a growing number of part-time and distance learner students. The university college has also broadened its intake in recent years by providing foundation degrees and short courses. An increasing number of students are therefore arriving at St Mary's with non-traditional qualifications, often lacking knowledge of the academic conventions surrounding degree-level study and of the standard of research expected.

Library and IT services are provided by the integrated information services and systems department within a single learning resources centre (LRC). Although a number of undergraduate students do reside on campus, this group is a minority overall and student services have to reflect the fact that most of our users live some distance away.

DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL SUBJECT LIAISON ACTIVITIES?

The subject liaison position within the LRC is perhaps most immediately affected by the changes in the student population and the wider information landscape. The long-established role of the subject librarian in stock selection is fairly limited

at St Mary's, as purchasing for the teaching-oriented collection is heavily reading-list-driven and formal control over the resource budgets lies within the academic departments. Traditional areas of expertise such as costing new resources, placing orders and general budget management are of course still core to the role. Some cooperative stock selection also takes place, in dialogue with academic staff. However there is no longer a dedicated enquiry-desk service staffed by subject liaison staff due to low usage and limited staffing resources; enquiries are all funnelled through a general information desk and roving service (on which all staff are timetabled) and then passed to the relevant subject specialist if they demand a detailed response. This type of service model demands new skills of our Information assistants who, since the advent of self-service, have been dealing with more information-retrieval enquiries than traditional library-counter transactions, taking on some of the work previously carried out by subject staff.

INFORMATION SKILLS TRAINING

All this means that the boundaries of subject liaison work have had to shift in order to maintain a relevant and valued service to support teaching and learning. The general trend has long been away from a passive 'guardian of information' stance and towards more proactive engagement with teaching staff to develop information literacy skills in students. We have not yet reached the level of establishing compulsory information literacy training as a credit-earning element in degree courses, as is the case elsewhere. However, we have made considerable progress in this area in recent years.

This is reflected in the style of training sessions given by subject liaison staff. Although we still deliver induction sessions at the beginning of the academic year for new students, these are no longer the only contact most students have with subject liaison staff. The ineffectiveness of information literacy sessions that are positioned at the wrong point in the academic year is well known. Moreover our experiments with drop-in skills sessions have so far been unsuccessful, with students seemingly failing to see the relevance of such sessions to their work, preferring on-demand assistance while in the LRC building.

We therefore encourage teaching staff to integrate sessions at the most suitable time in the teaching cycle (for example, when the first major assignment is set or during 'research methods' modules).

We can then make sure that the session is carefully tailored to the topic the students are covering, ensuring that the training has an immediate benefit to their studies. We have had mixed success with this, as this level of integration is dependent on collaboration with academic staff who operate within tight schedules, which sometimes makes them reluctant to give up scarce teaching time for information literacy training. The importance of maintaining constructive relationships with academic staff is demonstrated here, as obtaining slots in the teaching timetable tends to be contingent on building the trust of staff and demonstrating the value of our services over time.

FIRST LINE OF SUPPORT

Given that we work within an integrated service in a small institution, subject liaison staff are now increasingly serving as the department's main external representatives in all library, information and IT matters. Although we operate a full IT helpdesk service for routine requests and enquiries, our team often acts as the first port of call for staff wishing to discuss IT policies and technical issues affecting their work. We can offer advice for simple or frequently encountered issues immediately, while more technical enquiries or issues that require specific actions are transferred into the IT helpdesk call system. This 'first line of support' role of course necessitates technical knowledge and skills that go beyond traditional subject liaison. We are also moving towards a more promotional stance; the subject liaison team is being used to promote new initiatives and services in the department, thereby capitalising on the relationships that have already been built with academic staff in other contexts. This includes promoting our own services, particularly those related to information skills training.

BLENDED LEARNING

This promotional role has been particularly significant in the context of developing e-learning within St Mary's, and in building awareness of the benefits of the 'blended learning' approach in enhancing the student experience. However, the subject liaison team's involvement here goes beyond simple promotion; we now have an important role in supporting the Blackboard virtual learning environment, including day-to-day training of both staff and students in using the system to best effect. This goes far beyond the traditional role of the librarian in the VLE.

The same approach is also being extended to new e-learning services as they emerge, including the PebblePAD personal learning system and our recently launched podcasting and wiki services. This supports the work of staff in our newly created blended learning unit, who are now able to devote more time to more in-depth training, development and technical support. This re-focused role for the subject liaison team has resulted in a change of job title from 'subject librarian' to 'learning advisor', in an attempt to reflect the broadened nature of the post.

FACILITATING PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING

The subject liaison team has recently become involved with the introduction of peer-assisted learning (PAL) within the St Mary's LRC. PAL has grown out of peer mentoring, forms of which are used throughout the higher education sector. Peer mentoring often involves using older students to help their peers adjust to university life. Peer-assisted learning is perhaps less clearly defined; at the simplest level, it involves a shift from expert-led learning to a model that places the guide or 'enabler' on the same level as the learner.

PAL has been introduced at St Mary's in the form of student advisors, who are based within the LRC and operate in public areas like our 'learning café' and reception area. The team consists of four people, currently all St Mary's students (although this has not always been the case). They are identified to students by distinctive blue T-shirts with the words 'Can I Help?' across the back. Their purpose is to bridge the gap between the students and the LRC by providing friendly first-line support for a range of different information needs. In so doing, they are hopefully removing barriers to student help-seeking, especially reluctance to 'trouble' more senior staff, who may be perceived to be too busy to deal with their enquiry. The remit of the advisors is to help with using software applications such as Microsoft Office products and the VLE, and also assisting with catalogue searches and finding items on the shelves. At busy times they support self-issue by encouraging and helping students to use the machines. LRC staff have the option of calling the advisors on a mobile phone; this is especially useful when service points are busy and staff are not free to meet a simple need, such as helping with using the photocopiers.

The advisors are supervised by Frank Quick from the subject liaison team, thereby ensuring integration between their on-demand enquiry

service and the in-depth support offered by subject liaison staff. In conjunction with the roving support service offered by other LRC staff, the advisors help to create an informal atmosphere that is aimed at facilitating student enquiries. In many cases where detailed advice is required, the enquiries are passed to the relevant subject team member. At first there were inevitable doubts about the wisdom of employing students as part of the enquiry service, due to their inexperience. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that this model is working well in filtering enquiries and in encouraging students to make use of the different levels of support available in the LRC. The advisors have not replaced permanent LRC staff, but are simply offering an alternative access point for subject enquiry services.

We are always looking at new ways to make our service more relevant to students. The advisors maintain a Facebook group which has a growing number of members. They select people by searching the St Mary's University College network and sending friend requests. They also respond to messages sent to the inbox and via the chat function. The advisors have furthermore just started offering a service that involves giving generic feedback to students doing group presentations. This allows students to run material with an impartial observer acting as both audience and critical friend. The use of instant messaging is also being explored as a way of initiating contact with students both on- and off-campus in real time, as we feel this has much potential for direct engagement with our users.

CONCLUSION

The work of a subject librarian at St Mary's University College is still in the process of readjustment to reflect the changing demands of our students and academic staff. While long-established skills such as budget and stock management remain central, the role has broadened out considerably in recent years to encompass duties not traditionally associated with the post. We now play a far more active part in the teaching process than has previously been the case, and have taken on a wide range of new responsibilities in the fields of IT and blended learning support. We also play a key role in the multi-pronged enquiry and support service within the LRC, working in conjunction with desk staff and student advisors to deliver on-demand support to students. All this helps us to improve the students' experience of university, and to provide valued support to the work of teaching staff. Maintaining this position

in the future will nevertheless depend on retaining an open attitude to new responsibilities and service models as student needs change.

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Reflecting roles: being a successful subject liaison librarian in a changing environment



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In this article we have compared the experiences and views of a new entrant into the profession, who has experienced relatively little change, with those of somebody who is more well-established and involved in moving the library forward. This is in acknowledgement that academic liaison can take place at a local departmental level but that it is equally important at a more strategic level, such as with a whole faculty. The resulting article also addresses the question not just from the point of view of what skills are required but asking 'How can we measure the success of our liaison activity?'

DAVID STACEY: TRAINEE LIAISON LIBRARIAN

I began work as a trainee liaison librarian at the University of Reading in September 2006, having just completed an MA in librarianship. Lectures had addressed the different job titles used in universities and the responsibilities and skills typically involved in subject liaison work. The variety of supporting case studies and breadth of theoretical and practical preparation throughout

the course also reinforced my early impression of the role as essentially generalist.

During my induction at Reading, I was expected to learn quickly, actively developing practical liaison skills, meeting my departmental library representative and head of department and picking up tips from my predecessor's notes. Beginning the chartership process and its planning stages early on in post helped me draw together the different aspects of my day-to-day work. I then matched these against my previous expectations to identify my development areas and address these in my personal and professional development plan (PPDP) as follows:

- Develop my liaison role and subject expertise. Develop my supervisory skills (particularly for • planning/managing shelving operations).
- Improve my web design and maintenance skills for my role as assistant to the library web manager.
- Develop my writing style for university materials (in print and online) – adopting appropriate university branding and style.
- Develop practical collection-management skills.
- Develop my teaching skills for more effective user education, including e-learning – using the Blackboard VLE and completing the teaching and learning support programme (TLSP), accredited by the Higher Education Academy.

My skills for success

After the end of my chartership year, I reflected on what I had learnt from most and what could be measured as successful. These can be summarised into eight overlapping areas:

- 1 Communication and cooperation skills – I networked with course leaders to arrange student inductions and also built rapport with my library representative whilst arranging procedures to save time when ordering books and editing stock. We also agreed to exchange information regularly about budgets and potential item orders and to cooperate over development of collection policies.
- 2 Marketing skills – I learnt to justify (and promote) my own role and raise awareness of services and facilities. This ranged from maintaining a physical presence by visiting my department to reporting on student feedback from training sessions, as well as promoting

new library services such as online ordering of inter-library loans.

- 3 Subject knowledge and current awareness skills – these were developed by cataloguing experience, enquiry handling and attending key lectures. I also explored subject resources online, joined relevant mailing lists and set up publisher and database alerts.
- 4 Technological expertise – I attended courses, set up database trials and gathered online user feedback. Web-design skills allowed me to promote e-resource tips and update my subject information pages. Similarly, I used the university's virtual learning environment to disseminate teaching materials.
- 5 Financial and collection-management skills – I updated a collection-development policy, learnt how to balance stock editing with new acquisitions and developed budgeting skills to assist the department with choosing new books and serials.
- 6 Information literacy, teaching and training skills – I found the TLSP course really boosted my confidence and increased my value to the department. It helped me market myself and course leaders then recommended me to their colleagues! I now use learning technologies and interactivity as much as possible. I have learnt to base lesson plans and learning outcomes on student needs, not on what I think they should know; for inspiration and context, I also attend a lecture or two and read the module descriptions.
- 7 Cross-over skills: such as projects and management – I use what I've learnt from my other internal roles (e.g. web management, assisting our marketing manager with promotional work, supervisory and committee work), and apply this to my liaison roles where possible, for example updating subject internet resource pages or managing large-group training.
- 8 Continuing professional development skills – preparation, organisation and reflection on what I have done really helps me to identify what to do and what not to do. Building my CPD portfolio helped unite my disparate duties and plan my skills development in a focussed way.

How do you know you have been successful?

With increasing emphasis on evidence-based practice it can be tempting to focus on collection of quantitative information; however, qualitative and anecdotal evidence are also useful, particularly when using positive feedback in a marketing context. In practice, I've found qualitative evidence is the easiest to acquire – especially unsolicited praise or comments from staff and students I have helped – but a mix of both types is ideal. Statistics can be collected for contact and enquiry time with users. Student feedback can be quantified to an extent by using opinion scales, giving a score for a range of attitudes from negative to positive. Qualitative comments gathered at the same time help to explain the results and often offer solutions to any problems that may arise. Traffic-light feedback (what to start, stop and continue doing) is my current favourite, as it is better at pointing out specific things to change or keep than a set of numbers. Focus groups and online feedback questionnaires are also excellent tools, particularly for library-wide project work.

It is hard to gain output-based evidence for the impact of liaison work, but the relationships built with departmental staff will be a good indicator. I have found that success is very much about how much the academic department trusts me to be its advocate within the library.

A lot of these positive outcomes emerge through the beneficial process of reflection, especially through the chartership process, which enables a new subject librarian to tie all the different roles together and monitor progress. I found achieving professional recognition to be a good measure of success in itself, but I know I now need to follow up my chartership action plans, as well as those set out in organisational staff reviews.

Ultimately, the variety of roles, and the challenge to master them, is what makes subject liaison work so interesting and rewarding. Professional-development planning and reflection provide a springboard for identifying and measuring how successful you are at each aspect. Such skills are crucial to growing into the role and for ensuring that you are able to adapt to changing circumstances and continue to provide a successful service.

CHRISTOPHER CIPKIN: FACULTY TEAM MANAGER (ARTS AND HUMANITIES) AND COURSE SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR

I work as manager of a small academic liaison team at the University of Reading. The team,

which comprises six liaison librarians, including myself, communicates with the arts and humanities faculty; I serve as the faculty's primary contact point and represent the library at several faculty boards and committees. As with most professional posts at Reading, my role fits into a matrix structure. My other 'hat' is a course support co-ordinator role. This involves driving forward the library's activity to enhance its provision for taught courses. Invariably this means working across all faculty liaison teams, not just my own.

A glance through my (recently updated) job specification reveals that the post requires a wide range of leadership, managerial and professional skills:

- ability to link local activity with wider organisational aims
- communication – with all library staff and library stakeholders
- generic and specific information technology skills (e.g. Microsoft Office vs the library management system)
- collection-development experience (printed and electronic)
- project management skills
- negotiation and advocacy skills
- ability to assess the impact of course-support activities across library teams.

My job specification puts it succinctly. As part of our work towards 'Investors in People' re-accreditation, we also recently undertook a survey of all library staff to find out what *qualities* they think library managers, including those involved in academic liaison, should possess (many, but not all, might be subsumed in the skills list above):

- flexibility
- breadth of vision
- ability to lead by example
- willingness to muck in
- organisational skills
- time management
- expertise in your field
- coaching skills
- respect for staff
- successful/effective delegation
- accepting challenge
- ability to promote positive attitudes
- approachability
- two-way trust – you care
- co-operative approach to working with other teams
- awareness of individual skills and aptitudes
- diplomacy – tact
- gossip awareness

- professionalism
- decision-making – firm and clear.

In terms of the changing role and skills required, much of the way my role is changing is driven by the way the library responds to wider developments in the organisation. For example, the university library is responding to a university senior management drive to centralise academic activity on one site in order to achieve efficiency savings and standardisation of support services. This will involve the amalgamation of site libraries into a single central service. Planning the impact of the rationalisation and relocation of major collections in order to achieve this amalgamation is one of the main challenges facing all liaison librarians and faculty team managers at Reading. It is also part of the strategic drive to move away from printed to electronic collections, as appropriate, and to provide a physical library space that better meets the needs of current and future users. Promoting collection changes to our stakeholders, communicating the vision for our collections convincingly and ensuring that the collections project functions smoothly within my team will require me to employ communication, advocacy and project management skills.

At Reading, academic departments are now being encouraged to plan both their research and their teaching more strategically. This is providing the library with an opportunity to work alongside departments to consider how collections are developed in order to support academic activity in the right direction. A key skill in this area is the ability to negotiate funding and prioritise information needs across a whole faculty.

In terms of my cross-faculty course support co-ordinator role, again external drivers have changed the nature of the role. Initially, my focus was on improving existing procedures and services, especially our high-demand, printed course collections. In more recent times, the introduction of the Copyright Licencing Agency's Higher Education scanning licence and opportunities to acquire more ebooks for course support have given rise to new projects requiring an ability to engage closely with other central service and support departments outside the library, such as our centre for the development of teaching and learning, as well as the ability to co-ordinate work across faculty teams and motivate liaison librarians to become involved in projects. Some skills, such as project management and communication, continue to be essential. Other skills, such as better awareness of copyright law and also

familiarity with specific technology, especially the VLE, have had to be developed to meet the changing course support climate.

The role of a faculty team manager will always be changing, largely in response to shifting strategic agendas at university, faculty and library levels. Currently, the role is changing to tackle the challenge of moving from providing print/hybrid library collections towards providing a predominantly electronic 'without walls' collection. Dealing with the print legacy and developing new kinds of virtual collections will require old skills to be utilised in new ways.

Measuring how successfully skills have been utilised is more problematic. Being able to assess success requires, in itself, a whole set of analytical and reflective skills! But here are a few thoughts on ways I am currently involved in assessing levels of success:

- quantitative data – levels of demand for core reading, accesses to online services, feedback gathered from user surveys
- qualitative feedback from faculty and school committees, as well as individual user comments
- benchmarking where the library stands against other higher education institutions – do our collections compare with other libraries supporting the same subject areas?
- assessing how far we have progressed towards meeting our team/library aims and objectives (which are, in turn, are set to reflect the wider university objective); this process is reviewed annually within my team and is also discussed in individual staff-development reviews and progress meetings
- checking how well the team members feel they are being managed – 360 degree feedback, staff-development review discussions and evaluation of training needs.

A library manager's lot may not be an easy one, but, with the right skills, it can still be an enjoyable one. There are challenges aplenty to be met by adapting existing skills and aptitudes, as well as by honing new ones.

CONCLUSION

Although we operate at different levels within the organisation, we conclude that success depends, in large part, on reflective practice and recognition that subject liaison skills also interface with a host of other generic skills, including managerial and

technological abilities. The ability to be innovative – developing new services or ways of liaison, for example – is crucial, but so too is being able to measure the ‘success’ of such initiative in a range of different ways. Only with this ability can we know we are helping to move our library forward in the right direction and that we have both developed and adapted all our skills appropriately.

While we’re on the subject: experiences and reflections of a medical subject librarian



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This article is one subject librarian’s reflection on the first three years in post. It will focus on how library-school training prepares trainees for the subject librarian role and how ongoing on-the-job training also contributes to the skills and knowledge required. The article also describes the challenges and expectations involved in being a subject librarian.

INTRODUCTION

I’ve been a medical subject librarian for three years at a large, redbrick university, and even in that short time my role has evolved a great deal. When I first began in my professional post I divided my time between classifying items, liaising with my subject school on its resource needs and developing and delivering training for students. I now add to this mix with managing projects, writing for publication, chairing a cross-departmental group in the medical school, developing and delivering training to visiting sixth-form students and supporting researchers with search strategies for systematic reviews.

My library-school training equipped me for much of my role but it has also been the on-the-job training and sharing experiences and good practice with both internal and external colleagues that have helped me to keep up with a diverse and challenging role.

WHAT DID I LEARN IN TRAINING AND HOW WELL DID IT EQUIP ME?

My library-school training was very typical and included a wide variety of modules, including cataloguing and classification, electronic libraries, management, information retrieval, information literacy, project management and research methods.

Some of what I learned at library school was far more relevant at the beginning of my job than it is now. This has sometimes been because of organisational changes. For example, classification is now undertaken by our dedicated metadata team but it was part of my role for the first six months/year. Other areas have developed exponentially, such as information literacy, especially as my enthusiasm to become involved has meant a development of that aspect of my role. I now chair the library service's information literacy working group (ILWG), a group which implements actions from our information literacy policy.

As part of an electronic libraries module we had training in planning lessons and presenting and this has been very valuable because training students takes up a significant part of my role. From the huge first-year intake of the medical degree (400) through to new master's students and PhD researchers working on systematic reviews, the training that I provide is very varied. Even though my professional training helped, I think library schools could do more in the way of developing trainees' teaching skills and their understanding of pedagogy. Many of my colleagues have never had any form of teacher training and have said that they would have found it very useful.

Information-retrieval training has also been important as part of the subject side since I support undergraduates in their literature searching and researchers in their systematic reviews. The project management training I received at library school has also really helped with the project aspect of the job (especially writing successful funding bids), as many service developments are usefully planned and implemented here, using project management methodologies; this is perhaps another area that could be further developed in library-school curricula.

WHAT EXTRA TRAINING HAVE I HAD?

Since starting my job I have received a wide variety of training, both subject-specific and generic, internal and external. I think investment in train-

ing is important for subject librarians (as well as everyone else) as it instils a culture of continued professional development.

Subject-specific training and coaching have been given at appropriate times, and in context, with my line manager and colleagues, and have been essential. Understanding how systematic reviews work, what's involved in critical appraisal of papers, the intricacies of the five-year medical degree and what kind of information first-year medical students need to know has been invaluable. Also, self-study on medical terminology and the latest medical and health news has been helpful. Learning medical acronyms and the Latin or Greek anatomical names comes in very handy when trying to impress first-year medics or helping a PhD student through advanced literature searching.

External courses have also helped to boost my subject-specific skills and knowledge, including training on specific online medical databases and attending the annual health libraries group conference.

I've also had further training in teaching skills, in the form of a two-day staff development course primarily designed for post-doc researchers new to teaching. This really helped me gain confidence in planning and delivering training and it's also been important in making it known that the library is keeping up with teaching standards across the university.

Further IT skills training has also enabled me to explore areas such as Web 2.0 and re-usable learning objects (RLOs). A group of like-minded librarians and techies meet every few months to look at ways of using new technologies in libraries. This has allowed me to gain knowledge of, and experiment with, Web 2.0 applications, which in turn has helped in developing online learning material for use by students in our virtual learning environment and also in two of the projects that I've managed since starting in post.

I also recently completed an externally accredited course on team leading. This has enabled me to develop leadership skills which I employ in my role as chair of ILWG, delegating work-loads and setting objectives for the group, based on our information literacy roadmap.

WHAT HAS BEEN MOST CHALLENGING?

Chairing the ILWG has been challenging because the group and I have worked hard to drive the information literacy agenda forward by implementing actions and recommendations from the IL roadmap. For the ILWG much of this has been uncharted territory and so we often learn from the good practice of colleagues at other institutions. In some cases it has meant writing briefing papers for senior-level university management and collaborating with other colleagues across the university to join up the training we provide. As anyone working in a large organisation will testify, this can be time-consuming and frustrating. Even so, the group has forged strong links with individuals in other departments, which has helped us to achieve many of our objectives. Diplomacy and negotiation play a large part in much of this cross-departmental working.

The subject side has also been challenging. It has taken time to really get to grips with the diverse needs of a very large and demanding school. Undoubtedly, the most important process has been getting to know the key administrators, researchers, academics and IT staff in the school and building on those relationships. Getting to know medicine as a subject area (my first degree was in religious studies) has also been a steep learning curve for me but one which I have really enjoyed.

Collection development and management are still central to subject librarianship, at least at my institution. Over the past couple of years issues (including lack of shelf space) have meant more of a focus on the retention and disposal of stock in our libraries. Again, this means liaising closely with subject schools on their needs and knowing how different subject areas affect how you manage stock. For example, there are several clinical governance issues that I have to bear in mind with the medical stock – out-of-date pharmacology books anyone? – but colleagues who look after the biosciences courses have to retain much of the older stock because it doesn't date as quickly. Knowing the key people to contact and deploying negotiation skills have been vital in ensuring that the collection-development process, be it new journal subscriptions or disposal of old stock, is seamless and effective.

WHAT DO I DO NOW THAT I DIDN'T EXPECT?

I've been surprised at the level of autonomy we are given in this role. Managers have been very pro-active in their support of us all undertaking projects relevant to our remit, whether this is subject-based or other key areas of work for library services (research support, e-books, information literacy and so on). I have been very lucky that in my short time in post I have managed two projects and been on the team for a third. I didn't expect this role to be so flexible as to allow this, and it has been a hugely satisfying aspect of the job, with highlights including giving a paper at a conference on a Greek island. It has also helped me to develop my project management skills and in developing online learning materials and writing for publication.

I never expected to be as involved in the subject department as I have been either. The medical school at Birmingham is undertaking a systematic review of the five-year undergraduate medical degree: the 2014 review. As part of this process an evidence subgroup was formed to gather information needed to inform the review. I was invited onto this group to undertake literature searching when appropriate. However, it soon became clear to the members that they were receiving a greater number of literature-related requests than others and so I have now become chair of the group, helping to coordinate responses to information requests.

This highlights the importance the medical school sees in the contribution that the library, and in particular the subject support, makes. It is clear that our skills as subject-based information professionals are recognised and highly valued.

CONCLUSION

Since starting my career I've learned that there is a wide range of skills and knowledge that are employed as a subject librarian. Some are learned in library school but many others accrue on the job, including subject knowledge, diplomacy, teaching and IT skills. It's the combination of learning these skills and taking advantage of the opportunities that the role can offer that makes subject librarianship a diverse and evolving job that, in many cases, is largely what you make it.

Academic liaison librarians – where do we stand?

(A personal view)



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In their article 'Dangerous liaisons?', John Rodwell and Linden Fairbairn of the University of Sydney observe that 'this is a time of flux in the definition of what the faculty liaison librarian role can and should encompass'.¹ Developments in the external and internal environments of universities, their study finds, are driving the evolution of library liaison, creating fluidity in the role description. As one of the first two academic liaison librarians to be appointed at the University of St Andrews, in January 2007, I have experienced at first hand both the challenges and satisfactions of attempting to fulfil a role which is as yet a 'work in progress'. Keeping my eye on the moving goalposts of the university's strategic plans, I have had to focus sharply on the potential scope and capabilities of my own role, and to emphasise flexibility and adaptability as essential to my approach.

My initial job-description made daunting reading. Liaison with academic schools in the faculties of arts and divinity was, of course, my main purpose, but from this platform stemmed multiple other activities. I was expected to provide specialised subject support for designated subject areas, to deliver information literacy and research skills programmes, to work with colleagues in collection management to ensure that library resources are exploited to maximum effect, to provide specialist information assistance and interventions, to support the general enquiry service and to develop information resources and services. In addition my colleague and I would assume cross-library responsibility for official publications and reference services, find new ways of communicating with customers and promoting library resources, develop strategies and provide services relevant to the research and teaching

needs of the university and engage in a full range of staff-development activities, including presenting at conferences, writing articles and engaging in scholarly activities. My remaining energies I would reserve for 'any other duties appropriate to the role'.

What did all this mean in practice? The post's edgy relationship with subject librarianship was apparent from the start. Since the provision of 'specialised subject support' and 'specialist information assistance' was prominent in my job-description, I was clearly expected in part at least to fulfil this role. With only two of us in post, however, the entire universe of knowledge had to be divided between us – a task on which we embarked with a sense of tackling the near-impossible! I assumed responsibility for the seventeen departments in the faculties of arts and divinity, my colleague for the nine in the faculties of science and medicine. I learned quickly that I was required to know as much about resources for art historians as about the business information needs of economists and management students. In a precipitous learning curve, I absorbed as much subject knowledge as I could about the disparate areas I now covered, which included classics, English, film studies, history, international relations, modern languages, music, philosophy and social anthropology. Designated 'academic liaison librarians' in the exciting new 21st-century terminology, my colleague and I remained to the academic world at large simply 'subject librarians', and we were consistently welcomed as such by academic staff.

Even from the early weeks of our appointments, it was clear that we would have to work hard to define our purpose, and to persuade both our academic and our library colleagues that there was more to our liaison roles than that of subject librarian. While subject specialism was a useful jumping-off point for our activities, we had to stress the many other directions in which we planned to develop. The need to market ourselves and our new liaison product became quickly apparent.

With visibility crucial to the role, we created academic liaison web-pages explaining our mission and setting out our services.² We foregrounded our teaching, emphasising that we would now take this beyond the traditional 'database search techniques' classes and offer new sessions on setting up RSS feeds, creating subject-portals in PageFlakes, 'optimising Google', using bibliographic referencing services such as RefWorks and

Endnote and other aspects of information literacy training. The enthusiastic response to this newly extended programme in both the arts and the sciences has been gratifying, and has kept us particularly busy at the start of each semester. Responding to our job-description's requirement to 'find new ways of communicating with customers' we both made time to work on additional teaching projects. I developed an interactive online tutorial to run from the library's web-pages, providing self-help guidance for students and staff on how to satisfy a wide range of information needs, and my colleague worked on developing the potential of Second Life as an environment for information literacy tuition.³

Defining our role further was the fact that our activities were frequently outward-facing and took us beyond the library. We went out to speak to people, making the most of every opportunity to communicate with our schools and departments, and creating opportunities where none were forthcoming. We addressed school councils and lunchtime seminars, delivered 'staff update sessions' and organised common-room coffee visits. We spoke at staff and student induction days, networked at GRADSkills conferences and inveigled our way into the busy programme of orientation-week activities. We were presenters at an open forum of the teaching, learning and assessment committee, outlining the purpose of academic liaison and the value of information literacy teaching. Our theme was consistently, 'The library has much to offer. Tell us what you are doing, so that we can match its provision to your needs.' Often, too, our work developed in response to events in the larger academic community. If the year's enhancement theme required that information skills teaching should be offered during reading week, we created presentations to meet that demand. If the first-year experience was to be enriched by instruction on how to read electronic books, that need was likewise met.

Outward-facing, too, was my project of setting up our new 'friends of the library' group and organising a programme of lectures and activities to interest a mixed constituency of town and gown. This was liaison of a gentler sort, though with a fund-raising undertone, and facilitated useful conversations with a wide range of people who care about special collections and the library's contribution to scholarship.

Taking me further from the conventional librarianly role was my involvement with the university's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

submission for 2008. Reporting to staff in the RAE office, for four months I led a team of library assistants who checked and made database entries for each of the publications submitted by the university's 500 or so academics. This intensive exercise offered me the opportunity to engage with the academic life of the university, discover the research specialisms of staff in all departments and show that the librarian's bibliographic skills are integral and necessary to the whole project.

While progress was made fairly quickly towards developing a convincing and visible presence for academic liaison in the wider context of the university, it proved rather more difficult, however, to establish our place within the library itself. This was a library that was not ideally prepared for our arrival. Service-based, and with no tradition of even subject librarians in its long, interesting and frequently cash-starved history, the University of St Andrews library lacked the natural launch-pad for the new academic liaison. A natural evolutionary stage had been bypassed, leaving both of us uncertain from the outset of our place in the structure. Our appointments increased the number of professional library staff from seven to nine and introduced a layer of senior staff which this institution had little previous experience of accommodating.

Of necessity, existing service departments were already doing parts of the 'inward-facing' elements of our jobs, and we had to work sensitively to reclaim these. Teaching about the use of electronic databases, for example, now became our responsibility, leaving electronic resources staff to continue with the demanding technical and financial aspects of the service. It was clear from our job-descriptions, too, that we were to engage at some level with collection management and to work with the collections team on this. Defining just how far I was to be involved with this became tricky for me, however. As I was not working with the collections on a daily basis, lacked the collections team's detailed knowledge of the stock and had no line-management connection with them, I found it difficult to make judgements on the various issues referred to me. I had a constant sense of being parachuted into situations about which I had little or no background information and of being airlifted out again after I had hazarded a hopeful guess at the solution. I was frustrated, too, to find that since arts and divinity book orders went directly from academic staff to acquisitions, I was largely unaware of what stock was being ordered, and I came quickly to miss the system with which I had been familiar in other libraries,

where book orders were sent to the subject librarians for initial processing. Though I was billed as 'the first point of contact between schools and the library', I found in practice that I often was not. Academics continued to go directly to the collections team about collections issues and to the acquisitions team with purchasing enquiries, bypassing me altogether.

Academic liaison felt, indeed, as though it had been simply 'grafted onto' a staff structure that had not changed to accommodate it. Although staff on all sides largely dealt with the situation with goodwill and good humour, it was clear to everyone that there was frequently a lack of clarity about who was responsible for what, and that duplication of effort and general confusion were at times the unintended and unfortunate consequences of the creation of these new posts.

Even more awkward was the question of our place within the management structure of the library. Appointed at senior assistant librarian level, and bringing fairly considerable management experience with us to the posts, we had assumed that our status would be apparent, and were surprised and frustrated to find that we were initially not part of a senior management team. With no staff responsible to us for almost our first two years, we found ourselves perceived by some to have no clear management role. We lacked, too, the necessary workforce to get various projects off the ground. Now, 23 months into the jobs, we are relieved to have been invited to participate in a newly re-formatted management team, and to have been allowed to appoint one assistant academic liaison librarian to provide support.

It has been salutary and helpful to read Rodwell and Fairbairn's round-up of developments in academic liaison and to have their reassurance that 'fluidity' is the norm as this area develops.⁴ A period of adjustment is inevitable and 'growing pains' are to be expected as academic liaison finds its place within the library profession. Even more helpful, however, has been their recognition of the fact that the proper place for it is nothing less than centre-stage. Academic liaison is set to expand, to be the service at the very heart of any academic library, liaison librarians themselves taking on a new, extended and intensified role. This emerging role Rodwell and Fairbairn see as characterised by 'a more outward-looking perspective and complexity, emphasizing stronger engagement and partnership with the faculty and direct engagement in the University's teaching and research

programs'.⁵ Their further proviso is useful, namely that 'If there is a real desire for the liaison librarians to operate at a higher level, then [the question of] how the library as a whole is organized, and how the librarians are marketed and the language used, needs to be raised.'⁶

My own experience of these last two interesting years supports this perception. Introducing academic liaison to any library alters it fundamentally. The focus of its activities changes. Its services need to be seen as radiating *from* academic liaison, and the team as central and crucial to its mission. Not a 'plug-in', academic liaison can only survive if it is integrated and at the heart of the library's ethos. Libraries proposing to introduce an academic liaison team must accept that alterations to existing structures may be the painful route to a desirable end.

Rodwell and Fairbairn are refreshingly forthright in identifying the skills and attributes they see as relevant to the new 'enhanced' liaison roles. Top of a list that includes communication, presentation, networking, negotiation and project management skills comes 'confidence'.⁷ My own experience confirms the wisdom and necessity of that choice of attribute. For the St Andrews academic liaison service to move ahead in future years, confidence must be the key. We need to have confidence in the product we provide – to know that we are offering high-quality information resources as well as high-quality teaching in how to use them. We need to be confident of the value of our own roles, to know that our interventions make a positive difference in the academic community. Perhaps most importantly, we need to be confident in our conversations with our own managers, and to increase our insistence that there is a more significant move towards integrating academic liaison into a re-organised staff structure. There is no future for a tiny team that operates only as an appendage to a service-library structure which declines to adjust to our presence.

Academic liaison librarians need to remain unfazed by the uncertainty of the library landscapes in which they operate and by the fluidity of their roles as they develop. They should be alert to the opportunities the situation offers, embrace change and be vocal and confident about defining their roles in ways they want. Above all, they must be able to stand up for themselves. 'Give me a place to stand and I shall move the world!', cried Archimedes on discovering the law of the lever. Academic liaison librarians, fighting for their

appropriate place in the modern library world, will echo his cry.

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Changing roles for changing times: experience from the LJMU off-campus team



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INTRODUCTION

This article started life as a presentation at the 2008 North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL) Conference *Up Close and Personal: our changing roles in a digital learning age* in September 2008, entitled 'Who am I and what am I doing here?: the impact of the pervasive digital environment within an academic library'. The core theme of this conference explored the changing roles of information professionals as a result of living and working in the digital age.

We work in the off-campus team in Learning and Information Services (LIS) at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) providing the technical infrastructure, enquiry support, inductions, outreach and forward planning of the off-campus service to all LJMU students and staff. The two team members had two separate roles as Information Officer and Computing Officer when the service was first established, but these have merged, with more sharing of duties (and expertise) as the service has developed. In this article we aim to explain how and why we feel that we are in a strong position to embrace the challenges and new ways of working that accompany the development of the digital learning environment.

We briefly consider how our experiences could be useful to others and (from our experience) what skills are required by today's professionals.

WHERE DID THE OFF-CAMPUS TEAM COME FROM?

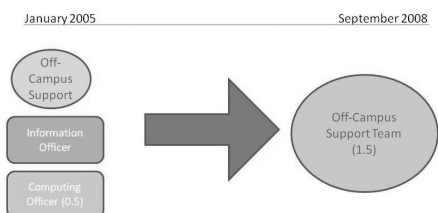
The LJMU Strategic Plan for 2003-2008 outlined the foreseeable changes to the portfolio of programmes within the next five years. It predicted that there would be a greater emphasis on post-graduate, professional and CPD programmes in the UK market and an increase of 50% in the total number of international (non-EU) students by 2008. The University's commitment to widening participation meant there would also be a greater emphasis on the delivery of foundation degree at partner institutions. Currently we have 78 partner institutions delivering a total of 263 awards. There are around 4300 students studying a wide range of courses in these institutions.

One of Learning and Information Service responses to support this growth area was to set up the Off-Campus Support Team in order to develop and enhance both the computing and library support available to off-campus users. An additional remit included the development of services to support the specific needs of the "non-traditional" user groups, for example students in partner institutions. Thus, the Off-Campus Support Team would become the first point of contact for all off-campus and partnership queries and would raise the profile of off-campus and partnership college issues within LIS and in other departments.

The team consists of 1.5 FTE staff managed by the Principal Information Officer for Off-Campus and Partnerships and has been at full strength since January 2005.

WHO WAS I AND WHERE DID I COME FROM?

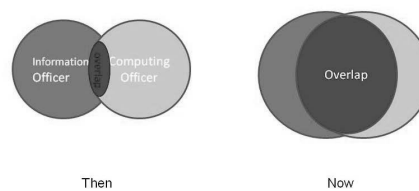
Who am I now and how did I get here?



As individuals we came from very different backgrounds. Cath has a professional library background with a Master in Information and Library Management completed in 1996, followed by a variety of jobs with Library and Information Services at LJMU, ending up in the off-campus role in September 2004. Rosie has an IT background, joining LJMU in 1993 as a Computing Officer with expertise in both computer software support and e-learning and becoming a member of the off-campus support team in January 2005.

WHO AM I NOW AND HOW DID I GET HERE?

Who am I now?



As our team has grown and developed, we have retained our individual areas of expertise but developed new shared skills as well. We have increased our individual and collective skills through the work we do, the willingness to embrace new technologies and working practices.

The NoWAL conference had four main themes, all relevant to the development of our roles: building relationships; engagement with users; skills development of users; and new staff roles and skills

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Liaison

Liaison is a big part of what we do. We liaise with other staff in LIS, with other University departments and with partners beyond Liverpool. We work with LIS subject information officers and computing officers to make sure that everyone considers off-campus issues in service provision, whether considering Library system developments, preparing user education sessions or writing user guides. We work with our colleagues in Computing and Information Services (CIS) to develop the IT support to our users and ensure that all members of LJMU can access our services easily while off-campus, alerting CIS staff to problems encountered, helping to test solutions and working collaboratively to provide web-based documentation.

Outside LJMU we work with a range of staff in partner colleges including administrative, library and academic staff. We visit our partner colleges offering a wide range of face to face services including introductory sessions, in depth resource searching and staff development in the use of the LJMU Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

In the Off-Campus Support Team we make great efforts to ensure that liaison is proactive and active. We have developed and continue to maintain key contacts within other departments and outside the university. We make sure we have a presence on all committees and groups which impact on off-campus users.

For the future, we need to work collaboratively to build a strong library services team to provide an efficient service. We always need to consider off-campus users when improvements or enhancements are made to our systems. Staff in liaison teams are beginning to leave their offices behind, to 'get out there' where our customers are and talk to the wider LJMU community to share/promote our expertise and resources. We can do this in a number of ways – for example, Faculty days in the Learning Resource Centres or Faculty Roadshows, visiting staff at their staff rooms or office desks. We all need to continue to build on the strong relationships with partner colleges – both library and teaching staff. Visits to the partner institutions are still very valuable in the digital age and the combination of expertise offered by a subject officer and a member of the off-campus team is very much appreciated. We work at maintaining strong relationships with other departments within the university such as the computing service so that we can influence university wide strategic developments.

ENGAGEMENT WITH USERS

Off-Campus Enquiry & Advice service

The off-campus team runs a virtual enquiry and advice service with a potential customer base of all 28,500 LJMU members. We have a dedicated phone number, email address, msn account, and web-based form all of which are advertised on our website. Our website is listed on the main LJMU student and staff home page. We deal with enquiries on a wide variety of subject matter, both computing and information and we have each had to increase our skills and knowledge base to be able to manage this effectively. We manage our enquiries using a database to keep track of incoming enquiries, but also use as a searchable

knowledge base and to collect usage statistics. The volume and range of queries is much greater than either of us has ever dealt with before in our previous roles and enquiries continue to grow year on year. We engage with the whole of user population and since the team came into being enquiries have increased by 200%.

LIS is now developing a one-stop service for all remote enquiries based on the experiences of the off-campus support team. The importance of the quality of this first point of contact for users has been recognised and service standards are also being developed to ensure consistency and quality.

SPECIALIST ADVICE AND KNOWLEDGE

We offer specialist advice in a number of areas including access to E-resources. We refer to information officers for specialist in-depth knowledge of databases and search strategies within subject areas. Our expertise lies in access to these resources from outside the university network. Our specialist advice extends to E-Learning support; we talk with academics about off-campus issues encountered by their students. We are part of joint discussion forums for Distance Learning courses, offering the expertise in technical support. We have embraced technology and integrated it into what we do, for example the use of MSN Messenger for enquiry services. We look forward to new technology developments and consider how we can integrate them.

With a dedicated broadband connection and hub we can test user queries in real time and adapt to the different operating systems and software versions used by students and staff. We support the off-campus applications service which allows our users to access their personal filestore, email etc. as though they are on campus. Using our knowledge base of queries we can share information with others both within our department and outside. We truly work in the virtual world.

We feel there is a need for a different approach to engagement with users in the digital age and a greater need to be more comfortable working in the virtual world. There are a number of areas we have begun work in and other areas we feel we should be getting involved in.

In LIS there is a small team looking at subject blogs as an alternative way of communicating with our users. There is a mobile technologies project under way, with a specific focus on how

students use mobile devices and how they can be exploited in libraries. Enhancements to the online catalogue (OPAC) have begun to make it look more like commercial sites used by students, such as Amazon. Social bookmarking in our VLE is another area under investigation. We need to increase the use of MSN Messenger among staff. We will be exploiting a new sound studio for podcasting or audio guides and, like many other information services, we are debating whether we should have a presence on Facebook

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF USERS

User Education

The off-campus team is involved in user education both inside and outside the university campus. We deliver on-campus inductions for off-campus students as well as going out to partner colleges to deliver user education sessions to them on their home territory. As part of this we develop printed and web-based materials to support these types of users. The resources we produce are important but we also feel that face to face interaction is as important. We know that our partner staff and students value having had direct contact with 'the friendly face at the end of the telephone'. We've discovered that students from partner colleges in particular are more likely to contact us after they've met us, because then they know who they will be talking to.

Our work with our partner colleges is once again proactive, we go to them. We invited ourselves to our partner colleges in the first instance and such was the value they gained from our initial visit, they subsequently continue to ask us to go back. We know and can see from our e-resources usage statistics that our visits have had an impact, particularly with access to Athens resources.

We have evidence to say we increasingly see a widening of the digital divide. Some of our users can be described as digital 'refugees', a term coined for those users, whether returners to learning, school children who stop formal IT education aged 14 or those who do not have PCs at home, who are at the opposite side of the digital divide to the 'digital natives' described in so much current professional literature. They form an increasing percentage of our student body and we have to recognise and address their needs.

What we must be very clear about though is that in the digital age we do not expect those who we term 'digital natives' are all comfortable, compe-

tent and knowledgeable in all aspects of library and IT resources. Even the 'digital natives' only know what they know; they have a comfort zone and tend not to be prepared to explore on their own.

As information professionals we need to be able to comprehend and help/support and operate at both sides of the digital divide and everything we do needs to take it into account. This means we need targeted and focused user education, whether that is face-to-face, documentation or online learning units. We need easy access to academic information resources, as easy to use as Google, whether in print or electronic format and accessible staff support.

NEW ROLES AND SKILLS FOR STAFF

Through working in the off-campus support team we have developed a wider range of skills. We have had to learn to be comfortable working both in the virtual and the real world, becoming if you like 'bi-lingual' equally at home in the virtual (off-campus) or real (on-campus) world. We have seized opportunities presented to us, embracing the challenges and possibilities offered by the emerging technologies and resultant changes to ways of interacting with our users. In essence, embracing emerging technologies has not only enabled us to keep pace with our users' support needs but has also given us the vision to strategically develop and 'future proof' our services.

So what does this mean for the wider profession? National and internationally there is a recognition within the profession that traditional skills and roles need to change. Relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes need to be developed to address this.

Examples of CPD which might be considered include:

- Self-awareness training – we need to know the strengths and weaknesses and how to play to the former and minimise the latter within the team
- We need to build up the base level of skills, to build up core competencies
- We need to have sufficient IT skills so that everyone can understand the basics and can recognise what is potentially useful and can embrace and take on new technologies
- Project management and group leadership skills
- Marketing and promotional skills
- Change management skills

Having looked at the four themes we recognise that the marketing of services underpins everything we have said so far. As a team we have put a great deal of effort into marketing and promoting our services, within LIS and LJMU and beyond. As well as the textbook library marketing tools we mustn't lose sight of the importance of a 'can do attitude', going the extra mile and we pride ourselves in being the friendly face of LJMU to promote our services as high quality and good value for money to our off-campus users.

What does this mean for the wider liaison team in LIS?

We need to market our services and skills in terms of benefits and we need to offer all our stakeholders (academic staff, students and budget holders) a clear road map to services and resources.

We need to put more emphasis on marketing and promotion to ensure our survival. If we don't sell ourselves, our expertise and our services our stakeholders will not value what we have to offer. In order to thrive in the digital age, information support staff at all levels in academic libraries need to consider becoming broader-based generalists (eg. by developing marketing skills) while still retaining individual areas of expertise (say, in particular subject areas).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we think it's important to make sure our services are future-proofed by embracing the technology available to us and using it to our advantage. We need to be able to operate on both sides of the digital divide and keep this uppermost in our minds when devising our user education programmes. The digital age does not negate the need for face to face contact but in fact makes it all the more important. By marketing what we do internally and externally we can prove our worth to our user group. In order to do all this we need extensive and continuing CPD for all our staff within Learning and Information Services. As part of the off-campus team we have had to develop and enhance our skills and we are keen to share our experiences. We are hoping to go to LILAC 09 (Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference) to talk through some of these issues with other interested colleagues and hope you can join us there.

Departure from the library desk! One undergraduate programme's story of its subject librarian's evolving role



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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have witnessed significant change in the working practices of 'subject librarians' in universities. This role is also known as 'subject specialist', 'information adviser' or 'faculty liaison librarian' and has been more recently referred to as 'effective learning advisor' (ELA).¹ Changes in job title reflect significant developments and changes in a post's responsibilities and working practices.² We aim to highlight the impact of the subject librarian's change of role through telling the story of one academic undergraduate programme, the BA in education studies at the University of Plymouth (UoP).

It was once the role of subject librarians to work within a library environment providing enquiry services and acquiring and cataloguing publications and library resources for subject areas through liaison with academic colleagues. Over the last ten years this role has evolved significantly and it is now common practice to observe subject librarians in a teaching capacity, working

closely with academic subject teams and university students.

These developments are the result of government and local initiatives and of policies in higher education promoting and resulting in the role's expansion. We might consider for example 'widening participation' and 'graduate attributes and skills', with related practices such as personal development planning (PDP) and the development of information literacy skills. These initiatives have had significant impact on the structure and content of undergraduate degree programmes. Ensuring that contemporary students are provided with effective and meaningful input and support when developing their information literacy skills, as well as reflecting on their development through PDP, are now integral parts of university learning. This aspect of the student learning experience needs to be managed effectively, integrated into and thus complementing their academic learning, as opposed to being seen as a bolt-on and as separate.

Our story is an attempt to unpack and make clear the changes in the subject librarian's working practice that took place at UoP in our BA in education studies degree from 2001 to 2007. Our work shows how, when managed effectively, these changes can have far-reaching and positive results for students, the academic degree programme and library team members.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INFORMATION LITERACY CURRICULUM

Our undergraduate programme began in 2001 and one two-hour library session was embedded in a first-year core academic module. Its purpose was to introduce students to the library and to online research. In particular the session covered the identification and accessing of academic sources for the purposes of delivering on a group task set prior to the subject librarian's input. The key aim of this library session was to ensure that all first-years were supported in getting up to a certain level of ability when making use of information sources for their academic work.

In order to assess the effectiveness and impact of the library session, students were further required to submit a related assignment consisting of a reflective essay and bibliography. This work was then assessed by the subject librarian and returned with feedback. In our first three years the degree programme followed this input with a subsequent and related session in year 3. The focus this time was on supporting students and

addressing any information literacy issues they had, particularly in relation to undertaking their final-year research dissertation.

In 2004, as a result of academic tutor feedback on student needs at programme-level meetings and input from our subject librarian on the national scene regarding subject librarian roles, we decided to review our library sessions. Our team's major concerns at this time were that students seemed to be more reliant on the internet as a source and were engaging less with critical texts. This – alongside the fact that our subject librarian was feeding back concerns that final-year students appeared to have little or no memory of the input they had received in the first year – led us to make additions, in particular, 'referencing skills' and 'plagiarism awareness'. These issues would appear to be generic across higher education in the UK, as has been explored more fully by Brabazon.³

Related to these developments, national policy in 2005 introduced a new approach to developing and evaluating the development of graduate skills through PDP. It was very apparent from team discussions with subject librarians that there was a connection between PDP aims and the information literacy skills already being developed in years 1 and 3. The response of the programme team's discussions and subsequent work by our subject librarian was to develop an information literacy curriculum across *all* years of the programme. This would provide the opportunity for students to acquire and develop these skills on a yearly basis, with annual evaluation of their application in related academic work through academic-tutor feedback.

We introduced a second follow-up session in the first year, which enabled our librarian to make use of students' assignments and tutor feedback from term 1 to assess their skills and pick up on any specific information literacy needs. Students were then supported as they addressed these needs in relation to their developing PDP, specifically noting points for action and review.

A third session was introduced in the students' second year for further follow-up and PDP work. Although similar themes are addressed year on year, there is flexibility in the sessions to enable students to bring along for discussion particular problems or issues.

The addition of extra sessions allowed the subject librarian to rethink content and develop a more responsive approach, slowing the pace of the orig-

inal content and also allowing the development of other themes such as mind-mapping and critical thinking. The emphasis shifted from 'accessing' sources through technology to developing an understanding of appropriate academic sources for the education studies degree programme. Further developments occurred in subsequent years, including introducing one-to-one tutorial time for students undertaking independent study and group tutorials held jointly with members of academic staff.

CHANGING ROLE OF SUBJECT LIBRARIANS

Although the development of an 'information literacy curriculum' within the programme is interesting in itself, something integral to that process – and responsible for the success of it – is the changing role of the subject librarian, particularly in relation to the programme, academic staff and students. Subtle changes took place to transform the relationship of the subject librarian with the programme team from that of external support to equal partner. Specific developments that enabled this to happen were:

- subject librarian introduced as part of the academic team to students on their first day
- subject librarian becoming an integral part of the team by attending team meetings, away days and module planning sessions
- subject librarian developing a deeper understanding of the content of modules and the underlying aims and philosophy of the programme
- subject librarian providing input into programme development, in particular how his/her support can help achieve and enhance the quality of the student experience
- change in academic staff's perception of the subject librarian's role from that of a 'separate persona' to an 'equal and essential partner' vital to the student learning experience and programme effectiveness.

Our integral approach to information literacy helps students understand better the role of the subject librarian and allows them to see the role as an important part of their academic learning. Students come to tutorials knowing what they can expect, which helps them prepare for and make the most of these sessions. The development of a tutor relationship, formerly impossible due to there being little contact time, helps the subject librarian gain a better understanding of 'where the students are' in terms of their information lit-

eracy needs. This in turn helps inform approaches to teaching and service development.

IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

Evaluation by the subject librarian indicates that student attendance at library sessions increases over the term of the programme. Evaluation by programme leader and feedback from academic tutors indicates that over the course of the programme students are increasingly making effective use of academic texts and show better understanding of research tools. Feedback from student representatives at annual programme-review meetings and from national student survey reports further strengthens our programme team's view that input from our subject librarian is a much-valued and appreciated component of student learning and programme success.

The following citation is from our external examiner's report in 2007: 'I was impressed by the provision for students across all levels for Learning and Research support, for information relating to what constitutes plagiarism, and for guidance on essay writing and referencing.'

CONCLUSION

Going through the process of writing about our journey has resulted in many questions emerging, questions which we aim to follow up. In particular we feel there is a need for universities to evaluate and address the changing role of subject librarians and to do so in a way that supports both their professional development and the growth and success of related academic programmes.

We have found ourselves linking to significant academic literature and theory, particularly finding strong connections in the work of Dewey on 'education and democracy'⁴ and of Gibson and Blandford on 'democratic models of education management'.⁵ We feel that the changing role of our subject librarian, the empowering of her voice and practices, along with significant student and programme results, all provide a case for a more holistic team approach in managing an academic programme. In particular, our experiences and subsequent reflection have highlighted to us that connections and effective working practices between traditionally divided sectors of the university – library management and academic subject management – can result in significant practices in student and academic programme development and growth.

Our work has highlighted the need for universities in general to consider and evaluate changes in subject librarians' working practices in ways that support them in working with academic tutors. Our experiences make clear to us the need for subject librarians to be enabled to act as integral components, and thus valued members, of degree programme teams. We could not have achieved the programme set out above without ensuring that the subject librarian's voice was included in our academic programme meetings and that her skills and resources were seen not as just an 'add-on' to the students' academic learning but as a fundamental (and thus integral and valued) component of their learning and therefore of our degree-programme offer. Recent academic research publications in this field concur with our thinking. In particular Reed, Kinder and Farnham, writing about collaborative processes in teaching information literacy, suggest that:

*'... collaboration will work best if it is planned at a curricular level, if the librarians are truly integrated ... if the librarians provide input on assignments and help with student feedback, and if targeted information literacy knowledge is tested. ... This planning takes time, but the librarians offer unique contributions and insight into issues surrounding information literacy that may not be obvious to faculty instructors. ... Integration of Subject Librarians into university courses has benefits in terms of increases in student information literacy and increases in Subject Librarian knowledge of faculty expectations.'*⁶

We aim to continue developing our subject librarian role and evaluating our information literacy offer through a collaborative process. As we know, the practices and expectations of undergraduate degrees are changing. It is important that the voices of all members of a degree-programme team are heard and enabled to feed into programme change and development. For us this kind of collaborative practice has been a success for all involved.

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UCL subject librarians get WISE in Moodle

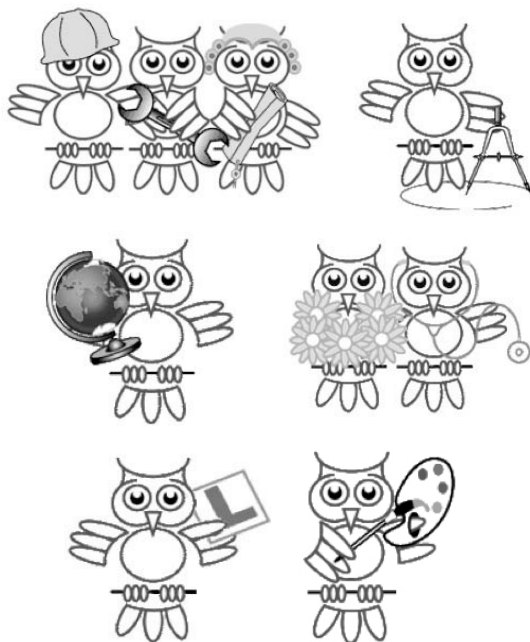


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Subject librarians at UCL (University College London) spent a busy summer this year remodeling and developing 'WISE', UCL Library Service's comprehensive online guide to finding and using information, ready for its launch in Moodle on the first day of the new academic session.

BACKGROUND

WISE originated from a need to provide training in transferable skills for graduate students, as identified by the Roberts Review¹. UCL Library Services was commissioned by the UCL Graduate School in 2005 to provide online training in transferable skills within the areas of information literacy, and the first module of WISE (WebCT Information Skills Environment) was launched in WebCT in 2005, accompanied by a series of owl logos to portray the WISE theme:



WISE consists of a series of subject-based modules, the structure of which was derived from the SCONUL 7 pillars of information literacy model² to ensure that all areas of information literacy were being addressed. Users can work through an entire subject module to develop knowledge across all areas of information literacy, or dip in to any module where necessary to develop the skills they need to complete a particular assignment, for example. A set of information skills standards were drafted, to be incorporated into the modules as a benchmark for the assessment of skills.

THE MOVE TO MOODLE

UCL's decision to replace WebCT with Moodle provided an opportunity to update and remodel the existing modules, to launch modules for the remaining faculties and to move towards an inclusive approach whereby all UCL users, from new students to experienced researchers, would find WISE a useful resource to develop their information literacy skills.

Much of the content of WISE is in the form of webpages, which meant the migration to Moodle was simply a case of uploading the pages to the new platform. Other elements, such as quizzes and glossaries, were migrated by UCL's Learning Technologies Support Service (LTSS). A new template was developed for the webpages to improve navigation, incorporating elements such as a menu bar and 'Next' and 'Back' links.

The name 'WISE' was retained for reasons of continuity, and it was decided that it could stand as a name in its own right, and did not necessarily be seen as an acronym (WISE comes from 'Web Information Skills Environment').

A new module was created, aimed at those new to academic work. WISE for Beginners introduces the importance of information skills and aims to get users started on searching for information. The original subject-based modules take users beyond the basics and are more geared towards those carrying out research, from undergraduate students working on their dissertation through to PhD students or research staff.

The move to Moodle also provided an opportunity to rethink the way in which online training on the use of specific resources was presented. Original versions of WISE included pages of screen shots and text. With the move to Moodle

we looked to make these sections more lively and interactive by incorporating Informs interactive tutorials and short demonstrations to illustrate particular points using Wink software.

PROMOTION

Online information skills training at UCL was not designed to replace more traditional face-to-face training, but to complement it and provide an optional alternative. WISE brings choice and flexibility to the user, providing information skills training at their desktop at exactly the time when they need it, and so they can revisit it as often as they wish.

WISE has been used by subject librarians in hands-on training sessions, whereby students have been asked to go in to certain parts of the modules, to link to an Informs tutorial, for example. The introduction of more interactive elements and self-assessment are likely to provide further opportunities for integration in face-to-face sessions. This is an important tool in promoting WISE, as students get to see and access it first hand and are therefore more likely to return to the site another time.

More traditional promotional means have included the use of posters and fliers distributed in the libraries, information on the library website³ and a feature in the library newsletter⁴.

Perhaps the most valuable promotional activity has been raising awareness amongst academic teaching staff. Activity so far has focussed on asking known academic champions to lead the way and further liaison will build on this. So far it has taken two main forms:

- 1 *Academic staff using WISE in their teaching:* An area of information literacy that is often presented to students by academic staff is plagiarism and citing. Some academic staff have chosen to make use of WISE directly in teaching sessions in this area.
- 2 *Integration with other Moodle courses:* Most taught courses at UCL now have an accompanying Moodle course created by the academic teaching staff. Many of these courses contain sections on information skills, which have been created without consultation with library staff. Now we are beginning to identify these courses, raise awareness of WISE amongst the owners of the courses and offer to provide subject-specific, quality content in

their courses. By adapting content from WISE we have produced brief 'tasters' within other Moodle courses, that link back to WISE.

In order to encourage other Moodle users to explore WISE, we are currently investigating the use of 'blocks' in Moodle as a promotional tool. The default Moodle screen has menus displayed down each side which contain 'blocks', elements which are customisable and can display various Moodle features, such as a calendar, RSS feeds, search tools, etc. We aim to develop 'blocks' that can be displayed in other Moodle courses and contain subject specific links to the relevant WISE module.

OBSTACLES

The biggest obstacle to the development of WISE right from the start has been staff time. The content of the modules is extensive and as such has taken a long time to produce, with coverage for some faculties being more extensive than others. The majority of the modules were developed by subject librarians as part of their responsibility to provide information skills training in their particular subject areas, on top of their regular workload. Once the Arts and Humanities module had been created, the authors of other modules could adapt this content for their own subject areas, but in most cases this was still a lengthy process. As a lot of the content refers to the use of online resources, it is constantly going out of date and requires time to amend and update.

Despite the increased pressures on their workload, in general subject librarians found the development of the modules to be a worthwhile and rewarding experience. They were able to develop technical skills, creating web pages, Wink demonstrations and Informs tutorials. It provided opportunities to refresh their knowledge of resources in their area and ensure they were up-to-date. It was also important that the content should be developed by those who are now promoting it and making use of it in their face-to-face training sessions.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Although WISE is now available in a complete and usable form in Moodle, it is still in its infancy and has great potential for further development. Some of the priority developmental areas we have identified include:

- 1 *Content and interactive elements:* Although we have integrated interactive guides to a number of key resources in each subject, further development is needed to cover all the relevant resources. This will also lead to further use of WISE within information skills training sessions.
- 2 *Integration with academic teaching and other Moodle courses:* In order for WISE to be successful it is vital for us to integrate links in other Moodle courses. Through liaison with academic teaching staff we hope to develop further integration within their Moodle courses and make WISE a resource which they value and to which they can refer their students.
- 3 *Self assessment to an information skills standard:* It is important that students should be able to measure their knowledge and skills and record their development. We are currently drafting plans in liaison with SLAIS (UCL's School of Library, Information and Archive Studies) and UCL CALT (Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching) to align the draft skills standard developed for WISE with key skills identified for UCL students with the aim of providing online self-assessment tools linked to WISE. Through collaboration with the Graduate School we aim to fulfil the original aim of WISE, to provide research students with transferable skills, and test and record their progress in this area.
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We feel that WISE has an exciting future and great potential to become an essential tool for UCL students and staff alike to develop or update their information literacy skills.

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Delivering academic support at the University of Sussex Library



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As part of a library re-structuring in October 2005, the University of Sussex library's senior management team took the opportunity to review existing subject support provision, with a view to addressing academic concerns over insufficient support for research and to providing more focussed and consistent high-quality support for learning and teaching. As a result of this review, the learning and teaching support and research liaison teams at the University of Sussex library were established.¹

As part of the changes, the deans of school and heads of department were asked to appoint an academic library representative from each department. These colleagues provide a point of contact with us for both research and learning and teaching liaison.

LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT

Learning and teaching support (LATS) carries out several of the functions normally aligned with traditional subject librarians. We are tasked with ensuring that all students on taught courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate, have access to the material needed for their course of study and the skills to explore and exploit these resources – whether online or in print.

LATS fulfils these major outward facing functions in a variety of ways.

Information literacy

We offer a range of information literacy sessions, from large-scale induction sessions through to bespoke course-group sessions, planned in conjunction with lecturers and based on discussed learning objectives. We also offer a teaching programme that follows a cohort of students through all levels of study and that is embedded into a course curriculum.²

All sessions are generic and skills-based, allowing us to adapt these sessions for all subject areas.

Liaison

Working closely with library representatives, other academics and other library sections, we provide reading-list material in whatever format is most appropriate: book, eBook, digitised material.

We ensure that the book budget is managed efficiently and transparently and is spent by the end of each financial year. This is achieved through working in collaboration with other library teams and senior managers as well as library representatives, gathering information pertinent to identifying need and disseminating information on spend levels back to the departments regularly.

We work with library colleagues to implement new technologies that will aid the access to and retrieval of information and ensure that teaching collections are fit for purpose and meet the needs of students, through producing collection-development policies relating to purchasing ratios and stock withdrawal.

Enquiries

LATS has responsibility for managing all enquiries coming into the library. We offer an e-mail service and a paper referral service and handle queries coming in by phone or in person. We also provide face-to-face training sessions for library staff on service points and have developed a blog to support staff on the enquiry desk.

Clearly the functions for which LATS is responsible are not unique, but we have had to approach them in very different ways. We analyse each task and develop a generic service solution. To do this, and ensure that the services provided are consistent, systematic and of high quality, we have to be focussed and streamlined in our approach. Procedures are trimmed to allow for efficiency and workflows are reviewed regularly to ensure services remain fit for purpose. Working within this structure means that whilst operational activi-

ties are important it is the bigger picture that is always in our minds.

Adopting a holistic approach has been essential for managing the budget and collection development. It also ensures that services are consistent across all departments whilst recognising that different disciplines have different needs. Sometimes one size does not fit all and we resolve this by working closely with the subject specialists, that is the academic library representatives, other academics and colleagues – both internal and external.

We are a small team and these functions fill our working days. We would like to offer more, see more students and provide more e-learning tools and tutorials and we believe this is possible, but only with careful planning. With enthusiasm, commitment and support, this function-based structure works for us in this setting. Operating separately from research liaison frees both units to concentrate on the differing needs of our respective groups.

RESEARCH LIAISON

The research liaison team is a small section who operate as the library's point of contact for researchers (both staff and students), ensuring, as far as we can, that they are fully supported with the resources and skills to conduct their research.

In close collaboration with academics departments we:

- work with departments and research centres to identify research strengths and concentrations of research interests in order to build appropriate collections in support of these priorities
- work on developing core journal provision for Sussex³
- are proactive in trialling, evaluating and acquiring appropriate major online resources to support research
- continually expand our coverage of digitised back-files of journal collections as funds are available
- develop web pages to support a general publishing move towards online resources in collection areas such as official publications and European information.

We have recently begun to evaluate the library's print collection, in consultation with departments, in order to identify out-of-date stock for with-

drawal according to criteria appropriate to each particular academic discipline.

We are also responsible for delivering training and awareness sessions to support research activities across the university. Because feedback and research evidence suggested that postgraduate researchers were not benefiting from larger group sessions, many of the sessions we now offer are bookable and bespoke, 1-2-1 or for small groups. In addition we have established regular slots on our teaching and learning development unit's university-wide programmes and we attend many of the initial induction sessions for doctoral students to introduce our 1-2-1 support service.

These 1-2-1 sessions have been designed to:

- introduce DPhil students to the range of support offered by the library
- offer a general introduction to the library's resources, focussing largely on our electronic material – not only journal collections but also the most relevant abstracting and indexing databases in their field for which we have subscriptions
- identify key areas where students might need more support, either directly or online via the library website
- identify research interests and directions to inform collection development
- alert students to specific Sussex collections of particular relevance to their research, such as the archives and rare books held in special collections, official documents including parliamentary papers, statistics, newspapers, the European documentation centre and the microform collections
- inform students of resources in other libraries and archives (with advice about reciprocal access agreements).

This 1-2-1 approach gives us the flexibility to offer sessions at an appropriate level, when the post-graduates and academics actually require them. In addition these sessions provide us with valuable feedback which helps us develop and improve the support we offer.

Feedback to date hasn't indicated any issues around a lack of subject approach. Many databases and online resources now have similar functionality and are very supportive, in their infrastructure, of basic non-expert interrogation.

We are keenly aware that this customised, individual approach may not be amenable to being scaled

up. However, we feel that at this stage, while we are building new relationships (particularly with early-career researchers), this approach is right for us now. Evidence suggests that researchers learn mostly from each other and if we can reach a proportion of researchers we know they will cascade the information to others who don't attend.

The sessions are popular and demand is increasing so we are looking at ways of automating support. We are developing an online tutorial aimed at researchers (we have recently been allocated Roberts funding to support this work) and investigating funding for employing doctoral students to cascade training to their peers.

Our PGRs (research postgraduates) vary enormously in their information skills and we need to ensure we are making sense to them, without patronising them. A process of dialogue informs us in our training and advice. What might be good practice now might not be in two years and we are becoming very adaptable. As we are a small team we can change quickly.

As we have reiterated a number of times in this report, this structure works for us at the University of Sussex, at the moment. It mirrors the strategic management of the university, with our PVC (Pro-Vice-Chancellor) for research and the PVC for teaching and learning. We are able individually to concentrate on supporting the strategic direction in these areas. That said, we work very closely together on the inevitable crossover of tasks. We share a working space, and staff work across team boundaries in order to offer support when it is needed. We now have a developed and innovative support mechanism for researchers and a consistent fit-for-purpose service for taught students.

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Research support at the University of Glasgow library



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At the University of Glasgow library we have been developing our research support profile through participation in the research assessment exercise (RAE) and, more recently, as a pilot institution in the research excellence framework (REF), the proposed successor to the RAE. One of the central metrics for the REF is citation analysis and, not unexpectedly, university staff look to the library for the expertise they require to support their engagement with bibliometric measures and the REF. The close involvement of the library in the RAE and REF has changed the relationship between the library and the academic community.

The library was asked to administer the RA2 element of the RAE for the university and did so successfully, in the process further developing and cementing the relationships we have formed with academic departments through our subject librarians, in particular with the RAE champions appointed for each unit of assessment. The library's contribution to the RAE has increased confidence across academic departments in the university that the library can deliver in areas of importance to them. It has also led to very close working relationships with staff in the university's department of research and enterprise.

In response to the Higher Education Funding Councils' (HEFCE's) announcement that a metrics-based exercise would replace the RAE, the university set up a bibliometrics working party as a sub-committee of its research planning and strategy committee. The membership of this committee comprises a member of staff from research and enterprise, myself from the library and a senior academic from each of the three academic subject territories. The library has created web

pages with information about the main bibliometric measures, to raise awareness of bibliometrics across the university. This working party decided to put the university forward as a REF pilot institution, which meant the library was centrally involved in that decision.

The library is now joint lead on the REF with research and enterprise. The university does not have a central publications database and collection of publications data across the university is patchy. The library has been able to use the relationships we have developed through our participation in the administration of the RAE to collect and put together the publications database that HEFCE required for the REF.

As result of our participation in the RAE and the REF the library is now well integrated into the university's research strategy and we have been instrumental in the university's Senate agreeing an institutional publications policy,¹ which includes:

- an institutional protocol for citing addresses for publication
- the requirement for staff to deposit the bibliographic details and full text of peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings into the university's institutional repository, Enlighten (<http://www.lib.gla.ac.uk/enlighten/>).

A recent presentation by the university's vice-principal (research and enterprise) at Senate on the research strategy for the university featured the library's provision of electronic journals and the institutional repository as key performance indicators.

The library has now been tasked with creating, managing and maintaining a central publications database for the university. This is a significant project, but is an important strategic aim for the university and the library is having to examine its priorities in order to be able to deliver the outcomes required by the university, including how subject librarians can support and contribute to the project. At Glasgow we have a subject-based liaison-led organisational structure for our subject librarians which, especially on the science side, is a model we are slowly revising. The demand for traditional subject librarian support in many science subjects has been diminishing as desk-top access to information provision has dramatically improved. Very few academic staff in science subjects use the physical library or seek mediation

with regard to searching for information (with the exception of medicine), but there is increasing demand for support for other services such as bibliographic software packages; institutional repository services; plagiarism-detection software; bibliometrics; the management of publications data; and curation and preservation of research outputs, potentially including research data. These are all areas where subject librarians are taking a lead at the University of Glasgow.

There are staff-development issues associated with this changing activity. Library staff are expected to have expertise in areas such as bibliometrics, and it has been a steep learning curve for them to develop this expertise. However, proactive engagement with this activity is rewarding in a number of ways: it has strengthened the library's relationships with other university departments, both central and academic, and subject librarians are able to expand their remit into new areas of activity, with impressive results.

REFERENCE

- 1 See <http://www.lib.gla.ac.uk/enlighten/publicationspolicy/index.html>

How I became a 'liaison' librarian

– a personal experience from University College Dublin



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INTRODUCTION

I started as a liaison librarian in University College Dublin (UCD) in October 2007. The initial euphoria and surprise of securing the job was followed with a degree of unease and bafflement. Okay, I have the job. They must think I can do it. But can I? And just what is the job anyway?

This article describes my first few days, weeks and months in the liaison librarian role, explores what the job is and what someone new to it can reasonably expect.

HOW I CAME TO LIBRARIANSHIP AND UCD

I came to UCD Library as a librarian just over a year after finishing library school, in UCD's School of Information & Library Studies. In my mid-twenties I had found myself at a bit of a loss to know what to do in terms of a 'career'. I had a job in a bank that I hated and there was a time when I could see no way out. But libraries had always held an appeal for me. I'd always loved books and reading. Whether it was Blyton as a kid, or Tolkien as a teenager, or Fitzgerald, Hemingway or Heller in university, the printed word and learning had always appealed to me. A library felt like a natural choice for a profession. On finishing library school, I worked as a library assistant in the public library of my hometown Kilkenny and then in the music library of Ireland's national broadcaster, Radio Telefís Éireann. People ask me now why I left RTÉ, it being the home of the Irish radio and television and, everyone assumes, infinite potential and romance. But its library was not a central part of the organisation. My perception was the non-library staff saw it as convenient but inessential, a bit like the Starbucks that was around the corner. UCD is across the road from RTÉ and had always held an attraction. I had

studied there for five years – doing an arts degree in English and history and then a masters in American literature, as well as the library course – and worked part time in its library for six months. I only ever had a professional development 'plan' in my head but, vague as the plan was, UCD Library was in it.

STARTING OUT

The job was advertised as 'Assistant Librarian, Business and Law', a short-term contract, for a little over six months. I didn't think I'd get the job and was surprised when I did. 'Assistant librarian' was the grade I was appointed at but the official role was to be 'liaison librarian'. 'Liaison' was mentioned in the advertisement and in the interview itself and I have interview notes where I list as my 'liaison' experience: 'I had to liaise with bank branch staff constantly in the bank. It's basically communication and I have excellent oral and written communication skills'. So, my job was 'basically communication'. Easy, right? In truth, I found out early and often that 'basically communication' was only part of it. There would be much more to it than that, thankfully.

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY AND MY PLACE IN IT

University College Dublin is the biggest university in Ireland, with over 22,000 students. Its main library, the James Joyce Library – named after its most glittering alumnus – sits at the middle of the campus. UCD Library has over 100 staff, 33 of whom are librarians. Of these, 19 have a 'liaison' role of some sort, the vast majority having it as their full time role.

There are five colleges and 35 schools in UCD and the library now assigns a liaison librarian to each one. My responsibility is towards the College of Business and Law, my role being liaison librarian for the School of Law and the undergraduate Quinn School of Business. There is another liaison librarian for the postgraduate Smurfit School of Business, which is located on a separate campus. Business and Law are two of the larger schools in the university and have ten library staff specifically assigned to them. There is a good team ethic with everyone working well together. I like working with other people, it helps focus me and being able to talk to colleagues, to listen to alternative points of view and receive constructive feedback, is an important aspect of the liaison librarian role for me.

A 'LIAISON' LIBRARIAN

The term 'liaison librarian' is a relatively new one in UCD Library, having changed from 'subject librarian' in 2006. The new term captures the variety of the job in a way the old one ceased to. 'Liaison librarians' continue to be 'subject librarians' in that individual librarians are assigned different subjects and are responsible for providing expert support to the students and staff in these areas. The job description gives an idea of the job:

- liaising with schools;
- keeping schools informed of library developments;
- managing school library funds;
- collection development;
- providing information literacy teaching and training.

In fact, the job description captures only a part of it. The work I do on a daily basis is tremendously varied and it is this that is the most interesting factor. No two days are the same. Since I've started I've had information literacy sessions to prepare and deliver, rooms and lecture theatres to book and set up, budgets to manage, books to order, electronic journal subscriptions to renew, databases to trial. Every day I have scores of emails to read, phone calls to answer and return, books to order, queries to deal with or tours to provide. Other days I have information desk duty, meetings with library staff, academics or students. Some days I have a course or conference to go to, an open day, lecture or committee meeting to attend. There is all this and there is more besides as most days throw up something I haven't encountered before. It's important to be able to prioritise as sometimes five things can land on my desk at once. Multi-tasking has become an indispensable skill. The hours are long and it's next to impossible to get everything done that I would want to within my official office hours of nine to five. Idleness is not an option, even if I wanted it to be.

TRAINING

For a new librarian starting a new job – especially in their first librarianship post – training is crucial. There is so much to know that library school does not – and in many ways cannot – teach you. One thing I was lucky to have in those first few weeks and months was a manager with an open door policy. Any questions? Just knock.

Mentoring is a strategy common to the private sector and, while not official policy in UCD, it's an environment that encourages questions. So, I knocked on her door and asked questions and then asked more of them. And they were patiently answered, as they have to be. In my own case, I did not learn to become a librarian by securing a qualification from library school. I am learning it on the job and UCD has facilitated this.

There was, and is, support. UCD has a conference allowance for professional staff and I've used this to go to conferences and do courses in my subject areas. I'm currently doing an evening course in the Irish legal system. I am just back from a Manchester Business School course on finding business information on the Internet. During the summer, the library sent me on a trip to Manchester and Warwick to meet with the business librarians there, to get a feel for the subject and the job.

UCD Library runs an orientation module for new members of staff where they learn about the most important aspects of the university and the library. This took place about four months after I started and in the intervening time a lot of the training was on the job. I went around to the information literacy sessions that my colleagues were giving, seeing if I could learn from them. I also informally asked colleagues for advice over coffees and lunches. The 'communication skills' I had mentioned in my interview probably helped me here. You do need to be able to talk to people in this job. I took from the advice I got and from what I saw and based my early experiences on this. Once I grew into the job, I developed enough confidence to do my own thing. I saw what worked and what did not work. I've learned to stick to the point. A lot of the training for a new liaison librarian is self taught. You've got to pay attention, to watch how people are reacting, and keep doing this all the time.

Support can only bring anyone so far in any case. All the questions, courses and conferences in the world will not prepare you for that moment when you stand in the lecture theatre in front of 200 students. Then, you succeed or you fail on your own.

GETTING USED TO BEING A 'LIAISON' LIBRARIAN

When I started it was early in the academic year and a very busy time in the library. My position had been vacant for six months. I had to learn and learn fast. In my first few days, I was asked to give an information skills session the following week, my second week in the job, where I

would be demonstrating business databases and doing sample searches for business resources for students and a lecturer from the Quinn School of Business. I had no business background and limited experience of using databases or of speaking in front of groups of people. It was a bit surreal that first time but refusing to do it would have been counter-productive. The only way to get used to the job, to grow into it, is to do these things. You prepare as best you can and then do it. It's like riding a bicycle. It's hard the first time, scary even, but the second time, it's a little easier and you go on until soon it's not a problem. So it is with information literacy sessions. It is easy to have self-doubt but you have got to believe in yourself.

Since that first couple of weeks, my expertise has grown. Business and law are both fascinating subjects and you can learn so much by just paying attention – watching the news, listening to the radio, reading newspapers. The courses and conferences I attended helped too. Immersing myself in the job was key to getting to know what I was doing. In my first month or so, I compiled a report for the School of Law on their budget and how it was being spent and this helped me get to grips with the resources – what we had, how much they cost, which were the essential ones and so forth.

Collection development is a big part of a liaison librarian's job and when I started it took some time to know what materials to order and what not to. UCD Library has an information resources development policy and I consulted that but there was some material that I had to make a call on. Would this book be a worthwhile addition to the library? How many copies to order? Sometimes, instinct answers the question for you. One of my schools had lots of money in their book budget when I started but the other had hardly any and so I had to look at 'creative' ways of raising money. The school with little money was quite proactive and came up with substantial donations from their own postgraduates and alumni association. A reception was held in the library to mark one of these donations with wine and food on offer, which also helped with raising our profile in the school.

KEY ASPECTS OF THE JOB – INFORMATION LITERACY AND MARKETING

Talking to students about the library and its resources takes up a large part of any liaison librarian's working life in UCD. I knew the theory of information literacy when I started, having

done a module in information literacy instruction with Dr Claire McGuinness in library school in UCD. All new librarians are expected to give information skills sessions and since I started I've given lectures and workshops in front of groups ranging in size from two people to over two hundred. Topics covered in these sessions include the library's print and electronic resources, newspapers, evaluating information, plagiarism and referencing, literature reviews and the bibliographic software Endnote.

Some of these information literacy sessions are embedded in school modules, some are not. Most of the ones I have given to the Schools of Business and Law have been at the invitation of lecturers in the individual schools. We run an information literacy module for all first years in the Quinn School of Business, and there are embedded lectures in the law curriculum on accessing and using the library's legal resources and on plagiarism. UCD Library also has a teaching and learning group of which I am a member and we support embedded study skills and information literacy modules in various subjects. Most students in UCD are now encountering their librarians in some way, be it in the library or the lecture theatre.

The library should be difficult to ignore. It is usually a big building right in the middle of the campus, as it is in UCD. However, a common refrain that I hear is: 'I never use the library; everything I need is online'. Indeed ...and paid for and facilitated by the library! Using a library's electronic resources is using the library. Promotion, then, is key. Everything is worth trying. In UCD Library, we run 'roadshows', where we go to various places across campus and demonstrate library resources on laptops. They are moderately successful but what they do is raise the profile.

I have had many informal meetings with key academics and am invited to occasional staff meetings in the schools I support. I am now a member of the School of Law's teaching and learning committee. As liaison librarians we need to keep knocking on doors, 'cold calling', arranging meetings with academics, anything to become a familiar face and name. I have a number of academic contacts now but much work remains in terms of marketing and the best ideas about ways of gaining a foothold in schools still have to be formulated. The job is never done.

CONCLUSION

I was watching a DVD recently of the popular American television show *Heroes* and was struck by a scene where the teenage character Claire Bennett was looking to have a forbidden liaison with a boy from her class. Seeking to avoid the watchful gaze of her over-protective father, she told the dinner table she had to go to the library to work on a research paper. 'The library', her brother scoffed, 'haven't you ever heard of the Internet?' 'Actually', Claire answered, 'the research paper is on libraries and how during the digital age they're becoming increasingly obsolete for our generation'.

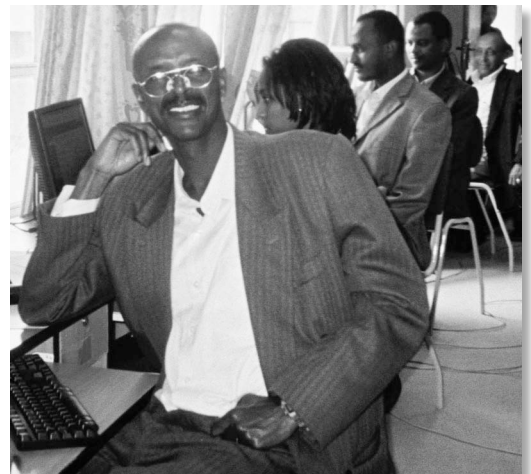
Now that I work in a library, I find myself very defensive of them and their worth. Sometimes I visit libraries when I'm abroad and places like the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. are awesome to walk around, venerable old buildings that just command respect and admiration. We cannot take it for granted though that everybody will feel the same way about libraries as librarians do. We know our value but we are probably in a minority. So it's up to all of us to ensure that we stay relevant, which is what we are striving to do in UCD. I've only worked here for a year and it's the first job I've had that I like. I'd like it to stay that way.

A week in the life of a subject librarian – with a difference!

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Everyone knows what subject librarians do, or at least we hope they do: mainly research enquiries; collection development; liaison with academic departments; and information skills support, in training sessions, by providing workbooks, or by developing e-learning projects. Many of our users are distance learners who can never visit our library. So perhaps supporting a course based in Ethiopia is not so different to our usual activities after all.

I'm the Law Librarian at the University of Warwick, and in November 2008 I spent a week of my working life in Mekelle, in Northern Ethiopia. Other subject librarians have done this before, so you may have already heard their accounts. However, it was a first for me! The School of Law at Warwick is working in partnership with the Faculty of Law at Mekelle for the next four years, in a capacity-building project to set up a postgraduate law programme, with PhD candidates as well as an LLM course.



The first essential is to assess how such a course can be taught and resourced, so last winter I was involved in discussing this, and whether the local

infrastructure could meet the needs of distance learners. Eventually it was agreed that when the first visit of Warwick teaching staff took place, I should accompany them, to provide essentially the same sort of training as I do at home. I prepared bespoke versions of the online workbooks which I normally use with LLM students at Warwick, and information for the research students, all sent electronically in advance and distributed to the students by the staff at Mekelle.



I believe it was well worth the effort to visit Ethiopia in person. Most of the students have experience of using free websites and other IT facilities, but not such complex databases as Westlaw or LexisNexis, so personal explanations and assistance are essential. This is challenging when limited to three sessions of two hours each. I held one session for everyone, to explain e-books and e-journals, and the principles of database searching, and two 'repeat' sessions - for PhD candidates and LLM students respectively - on using law databases.

The challenges grew, as I found out that what I had been told about slow internet access abroad

was no exaggeration. Practice time was severely restricted when the Sudan gateway failed and sometimes the power was lost altogether. I was prepared for this, having talked to international students and Warwick lecturers about these issues; I also read a recent article on library services in Addis Ababa, which was helpful preparation before setting out¹.

Even when armed with demos on memory sticks and extra back-up floppy disks (on the belt, braces and blu-tak principle) it still feels bad when you finish a database demo and the power fails after twenty minutes of practice time! The students were further disadvantaged by a delay in their registration, so they could not immediately begin to get practice, after I left. Hopefully this is being resolved as I write. What really impressed me was the speed with which they worked when the internet permitted, and their efficient downloading of relevant material.

When considering how to support a capacity-building project, I would suggest the following points:

Advantages:

- students are likely to be very hard-working and willing to learn new things quickly;
- governments and NGOs are often keen to fund higher education – Mekelle has good new facilities;
- education is highly valued in developing countries - numbers of undergraduates studying law at Mekelle have doubled since the Faculty opened eight years ago;
- there is a growing number of well-trained professional librarians who are keen to exploit new resources and develop library services;
- the lecturers and I had opportunities to get to know the students very well, which should



make up for the fact that we can no longer talk to them in person;

- the librarian has an opportunity to work with lecturers and demonstrate that information skills are integral to research skills;
- any visiting librarian who is willing to work with overseas colleagues and learn from them will receive a very warm welcome!

Challenges:

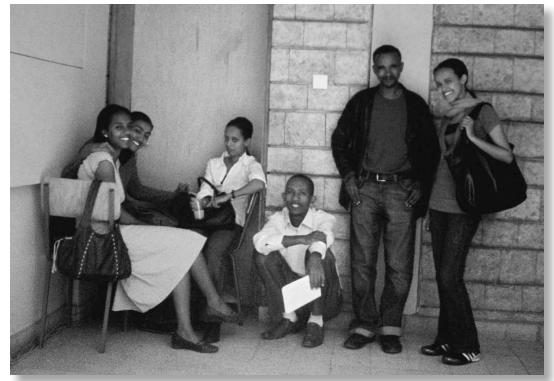
- there are infrastructure issues;
- the visit may take up time in the midst of a busy term;
- time for training sessions may be very limited;
- training materials must be especially clear and comprehensive, as it is not so easy to explain any ambiguities later on;
- schedules may be more fluid than one is used to – I was happy to “go with the flow”;
- it is essential to support local librarians and students after the visit ends.



FUTURE PLANS

In the first phase of the project I am currently seeking detailed feedback from the Warwick Law School, which will be essential to guide me over the next two years of the course and may require changed approaches for Phase 2. Already I have decided that when I return to Ethiopia I will use memory sticks even more, as power is generally more reliable than the internet connection. When all technology fails, it is amazing how good it can be to talk, too.

As well as e-mail contact, I plan to contribute to the course forum, if and when that is set up, or may provide my own blog. Most databases provide online help, and some law databases offer online tutorials. I am confident that the local librarians will learn how to assist students quite rapidly, and the students will also help each other.



Having said all that, I still wish the students could just pop into my office occasionally! Sitting down to see where someone is having trouble with a database search can be so much easier than explaining it via e-mail. However, many of our home students behave exactly like distance learners – and not all of them work as hard as the Mekelle group have done so far. In that one week, the number of “hits” on Warwick Library web pages from students in Ethiopia shot up, putting them at number 5 in the top ten list of web page accesses from abroad. So amid many memories of kites soaring on the thermals, herds of donkeys on their way to market, the contrast of ancient and modern, rich and poor, and especially one of the warmest welcomes I’ve ever had, I will be concentrating on developing online guidance in 2009. I wonder where the Warwick Law School will send me next?

NOTES

- 1 Marie Paiva. *A quick glimpse at public and academic libraries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, February 2008, http://www.against-the-grain.com/TOCFiles/20-1_Paiva.pdf [accessed December 2008]

All that David Copperfield kind of c * * p



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(Retired December 2008)

The problem with being canvassed to write an article for a publication is that the vanity of liking the sight of your own voice immediately overcomes the very practical countervailing consideration of 'What on earth am I going to write about?' It is the dilemma that clearly faces so many of our journalists who are called 'feature writers'. In order to earn their living and maintain their semi-idyllic lifestyle of working from home for a few hours each week for a truckload of money, every week they have to come up with another feature that is at once witty and thought-provoking, or – in the case of some tabloids – witty and offensive. You can see when they have been struggling with their muse because you are subjected to 250 words on changing the baby's nappy or 'how unbelievably incompetent my bloke is at changing the tap washer', but then this may be marginally more entertaining than the months of increasingly bitter reflections on how my husband/wife left me for the au pair/personal trainer/salsa dance tutor. But I digress and was only making a point, a rather laboured point, that once asked I had to come up with a subject suitable for an audience of academic librarians, which means trying to be simultaneously engaging and witty whilst including challenging references to Web 2.0 and open archive repositories. If that is your expectation then you can avoid disappointment by skipping the rest of this article.

I should start by explaining the odd and slightly scatological title, although the very literary amongst you will instantly recognise it as a quotation from the opening sentence of J.D. Salinger's famous novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. At least it was famous in the 60s when I was a student and actually read it. I can't be bothered explaining the plot of *The Catcher in the Rye*, partly because it isn't relevant to anything I have to say but mostly because I can't remember it. Judging by the

increasingly young and fresh-faced delegates to SCONUL Conference, however, I perhaps ought to explain that the 60s was a brief golden age of innocence, love and mind-altering drugs that appeared all too briefly between the extinction of the dinosaurs and the emergence of more modern but equally terrifying creatures such as computer networks, the sports utility vehicle and Margaret Thatcher.

Anyway, to make any sense at all I ought to explain the reason for the quote. The full version of it goes like this:

'If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to hear is when I was born and what my lousy childhood was like and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it ... the stuff bores me.'

The phrase 'all that David Copperfield crap' was the very first thing that sprung to mind when I was asked to make an after-dinner speech to a CoFHE (Colleges of Further and Higher Education Group of CILIP) conference some time ago and to talk about 'my life and how I got to be where I am today'. When I was asked to do something for *SCONUL Focus* the editor liked the sound of this, especially as I could do it as I was about to retire – which is indeed about to happen so that speech has been 'extensively revised with much new original material', as the marketing people might say.

If I was a politician or an actor an invitation to talk about 'my life and how I got to be where I am today' would be irresistible and I would be off on an unstoppable stream of self-regarding little anecdotes full of well-known celebrities and exotic locations. Sadly my life is less David Copperfield and more a male version of *Bridget Jones's Diary* or Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*: libraries generally don't – and my life in particular doesn't – provide quite the same scope for blatant name-dropping and outrageous vanity as the lives of the rich and famous. (Although frankly some of the sad and dreary lives that pass for celebrity in reality TV shows nowadays make my life seem positively glamorous.) Exotic locations I can do: I have been fortunate enough to go to very many overseas locations as part of my job and amongst other wonderful things I have had dinner at the top of the KL Tower in Kuala Lumpur (then the second tallest building in the world), seen the Maharajah's Palace in Mysore and walked on the Great Wall of China. But I've

only met a couple of so-called celebrities. I met Princess Anne but only for about half an hour when she opened our new library. She didn't say a lot. The Royals aren't encouraged to say a lot as it only leads to questions in Parliament, but she was good-humoured and good value and even laughed at some of my jokes (which may have involved the inappropriate use of rude words for comic effect). Still, she was like a cheerleader on amphetamines compared with the Shanghai Minister of Education, whom I met on a visit to China and who only spoke through an interpreter. He had no small talk and even less of a sense of humour, but as I was the leader of our delegation, protocol dictated that I had to talk to him and he would only talk to me for three hours, which seemed to last as long as Lent. Whilst the rest of our party were alternating between offering up silent prayers of thanks for being spared my ordeal and revelling gleefully in schadenfreude I was slowly losing the will to live and desperately hoping for someone to come and inject me with novocaine to make it all stop.

Still my career hasn't always been as wonderful as that and I must concentrate on the achievements and love for my chosen profession, and avoid at all costs allowing this to dissolve into a wine-soaked tirade about what a waste my life has been, where did it all go wrong, and what's the point of libraries anyway now that that evil genius Dr Google has achieved world domination over the information universe.

So if I am going to talk about my life I should start at the beginning. I am one of these really sad people who always wanted to be a librarian. I didn't back into it as a second-best option because I failed the medical for the SAS or end up in my career by accident because I walked into the Library Association mistaking it for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, or even – as in the case of one of my colleagues – because she liked the shoes librarians wore! (They were Scholl's sandals, apparently, and she was at an impressionable age!)

I say 'sad' because I am not sure how many of you actually wanted to be a librarian, as distinct from finding that it was better than all the alternatives indolent or indifferent careers advisers gave you when you filled out the questionnaire and said you liked reading and had a weakness for tweed skirts. I don't think 'librarian' is up there with iconic career aspirations like train-driver, astronaut, doctor or barrister and I just can't believe that, even in some bizarre parallel universe, there

is a moving scene as you tell your Mam and Dad what you want to do when you grow up and they choke back the tears and sob, 'He wants to be a librarian just like his mother and granddad. By heck I'm so proud!'

When I say I always wanted to be a librarian that's not strictly true. What I really wanted to be when I was much younger was a postman. And before you start, this was decades before that annoying children's programme with the black and white cat. Now I know that sounds a bit weird in 2008, especially to those of you who had youthful ambitions to be management consultants, systems analysts, lawyers or hedge-fund managers but, being a working-class lad, where I came from any job that didn't involve 45 years down the nearest coal mine was considered pretty posh and therefore a damn good prospect. In my village there were only two kinds of men: there were miners and there were retired miners. My Dad, who contracted silicosis down the pit and had to leave before it killed him, was determined I wasn't going anywhere near the pit so he was thrilled with the idea of me becoming a postman. You got a uniform, your own transport – well, a bike – and a steady if unspectacular wage. In fact if you squinted really hard it was almost a civil-service job, being part of a government body with a pension and all that! Unfortunately I won a scholarship to the local grammar school, where they send all the working-class kids who are too clever for secondary modern and where as fast as the teachers are trying to make the most of that little bit of cleverness the majority of kids who are middle-class are busily trying to kick all the cleverness out of you. Not physically, I hasten to add, but out of you nonetheless, so the announcement in careers lessons that I wanted to be a postman might have sounded pretty good to my dad but actually would just mark me out as a loser of Wall Street Crash proportions.

So I wasn't going to be a postman and I had no intention of being a teacher, which was the usual route that we were encouraged to take at the grammar school. The thinking was that we were never going to get into university, being working-class and from an area of the country with one of the highest indexes of multiple deprivation. We might just scrape into the second division that was teacher-training college. But I had seen what kids did to teachers, which was why I liked the idea of the bike and the uniform, so I had to find an alternative. And then it happened, in one of those serendipity moments, as I was browsing one lunchtime in the careers library – as you did when

you couldn't get a game of football because you were considered crap at it and you couldn't go home because the school bully had thrown your bike onto the gymnasium roof. I came across a small unprepossessing pamphlet from the Library Association extolling the virtues of a being a scholarly librarian in a research library, complete with full-colour pictures of leather-topped tables and row after row of elegantly bound volumes and not an obnoxious student in sight – in fact no readers at all, as far as I could see. This was great. I decided there and then just what I had been looking for to take my mind off the bike and the uniform. I was smitten; this was the life for me and I wasted no time in writing to the famous Ridgmount St address at the bottom of the leaflet asking for details of how I could enlist and take Bodley's shilling. I say 'writing', and of course I did in those days with a real pen on proper note-paper and in my very best handwriting, because there were no word processors then or email. My huge bubble of enthusiasm was only slightly deflated when a few days later I received a small brown envelope, clearly from the LA, addressed to Miss P. H. Wood – clearly my very best handwriting was not very good. Being mistaken for someone called Wood I could just about cope with, but it was the 'Miss' bit that hurt: not only was I at a sensitive age but it showed that even the LA were not immune from institutionalised stereotyping, believing that the applicant must be a demure young lady rather than the beer-swilling football-playing bloke who actually wanted to become a librarian.

It was the kind of antidote to self-delusion that I have come across several times in my life: they either keep your feet on the ground or drag your confidence into the gutter. The most wounding one was when I used to play football as goal-keeper for the local pub team, when it has to be said I did carry a little weight. After a poor display on Leicester's Humberstone Park I was strolling disconsolately to the dressing rooms when a couple of young kids came up to me and said, 'Eh, are you the goalie?', the bright yellow jersey being a bit of a giveaway. 'Yes', I replied, suddenly brightening up at this unexpected recognition. 'Oh', he said; '... you're fat for a goalie.'

But I am digressing once again.

The one slight drawback with my newfound career was that I needed a degree, since this was the very early days of 'a graduate profession'. Bear in mind my comments earlier that our chances of getting a place at university were even

slimmer than Russell Brand's trouser legs. This would have been a problem had the government not just introduced these wonderful things called 'polytechnics', designed to attract people too clever to be postmen but not clever enough to be doctors. So off I went to Portsmouth Polytechnic where they had places left on a joint History and English Literature degree for people who had astounded everyone by getting good 'A' level grades.

My experience of libraries and librarians at polytechnic and later was frankly a little dispiriting. The library I was confronted with for my degree was a far cry from that elegant and refined research library in the careers library leaflet. The government might have invented polytechnics but they hadn't given them any money and my library looked exactly what it was: a converted army drill hall with shelves round the walls and an ocean of utilitarian and painfully uncomfortable exam desks and chairs across the rest of the floor. The library had all the atmosphere and charm of a deserted Scout hut.

In my earliest library job after graduating, as a library assistant at Leicester Polytechnic's Architecture and Building Library, my illusions were further eroded. Because of course a degree wasn't enough; you also had to get a postgrad qualification and to do that you had to have at least a year's work experience. I am amazed that anyone stays the assault course that is our professional qualification process. Compare it with my original aspirations to become a postman. There it would have been just a question of 'Here's your hat, here's your bike, these are letters and this is a letterbox. Off you go!'

At least the Architecture and Building Library and the other libraries on campus looked like real libraries instead of Dutch barns with bookshelves. But I was thoroughly unimpressed by what I saw of some of the senior staff and their apparent status within the college. The unprepossessing Chief Librarian, as they were called then, was not at all my idea of a person in such an important role. He put me in mind most of Churchill's description of Clement Atlee as a 'modest man with much to be modest about'. Worse, if we were to believe all we were told by longer-serving colleagues, he was a rather toxic combination of the amoral ruthlessness of Machiavelli and the charmless incompetence of Mr Bean. He was held in contempt by all the other senior staff who formed what would have been his management team if they had ever got round to doing any managing

instead of engaging in character assassination of the boss and bickering and point-scoring amongst themselves. Instead of being at the heart of some learned research institute as I had fondly imagined, it was like walking into some institutional dysfunctional family or slipping into a particularly bad episode of *EastEnders*.

My faith in libraries as a career was eventually restored, however. If my library experiences to date had been disappointing, my experience at St Katherine's College in Liverpool where I did my library school placement was everything that I had hoped for. It was managed by a gentlemanly and avuncular librarian complete with cord jacket (and possibly even a pipe, but perhaps I just imagined that through my rose-tinted spectacles) and a group of wonderful assistants who were very receptive to this short fat hairy bloke that had been deposited on them. It was an oasis of the kind of pleasant erudition and charm that not even the staff common room could spoil. It was full of those dreadful chairs you always got in common rooms in the 60s and 70s that looked like they had come from the set of *The Belles of St Trinian's* or *Carry on Doctor* and were designed in a style best described as Albanian austerity chic.

Early on in my placement I was asked what I made of the library profession, as a potential newcomer. Being the usual clever sod not long out of university, and reflecting on my experiences as a student and at Leicester, I said that I felt that the status of the librarian seemed to have declined to an alarmingly sad level. In the early days of higher education, I said, from a knowledge-base so slender it could slip under a tightly fitting door, the librarian was an important enough figure to be allowed to parade just behind the Vice-Chancellor at formal university processions. Nowadays, I pontificated, it seems that the librarian is lucky to be lining up behind the tea lady. It got a cheap laugh and although I didn't quite imply I was going to sort this out, I think that was the general impression I must have made. Well, I am delighted to say that in the last few degree processions in the wonderful Coventry Cathedral I did indeed line up sitting on the front row right next to the VC and processed out right behind her. I don't think too many people noticed that I had to elbow a couple of honorary graduates out of the way and trip up the Lord Mayor of Coventry to get there.

But I am getting ahead of myself. I spent two years as a library assistant, as I have said, and then spent an entertaining if uneventful year at

library school in Liverpool. (I think 'uneventful' might be a euphemism for 'unconscious', as we had discovered that by shuffling between three different venues you could actually drink all afternoon, decades before licensing laws were liberalised to allow this everywhere.) Then I returned to Leicester Polytechnic, more by inertia than good judgement, with the intention of spending the two years I needed to achieve my goal of chartered status there and then move on to something different and hopefully better. When the something different and better finally came along, in the form of the post of Deputy Librarian at Staffordshire University, it was three jobs, a wife, two kids, several cats, a house, a load of debts and 15 years later.

I am still not entirely sure how the journey from Assistant Librarian (Periodicals) at Leicester Polytechnic ended up as University Librarian at Coventry. One of our Deans at Coventry once said that presumably we had all got to where we were because we were ambitious, but I don't think that was true in my case. In the early part of my career I wasn't at all ambitious. It was sufficient to be in a secure, professional job, with pay not bad compared to some of my friends, and working with colleagues who were mainly good company as well as professional colleagues – and, I like to think, for the most part also friends. In this pleasant environment I was able bit by bit to get over the obsession with the bike and the uniform, but only just!

I even began to learn useful lessons about managing people and projects from one of the few honourable exceptions to my previous comments about dysfunctional managers. I began slowly to realise that life as a jobbing librarian, even when enriched by a very fulfilling role as an active trade unionist, was not sufficient to provide long-term satisfaction. I suppose that if there are reasons why I got to where I am today they are less to do with ambition and more to do with a belief gradually dawning over several years that perhaps I could do a bloody sight better than some of the managers under whom I had worked, and I resolved to do something about it. It is only much later, when you are sitting on the lonely and wind-swept pinnacle that is senior management, that you realise what a powerful and dangerous delusion this is. But in my blissful naivety I persisted, blagging my way into a more senior role and onto a part-time MBA. Individually and together these proved liberating experiences that only served to reinforce the delusion that perhaps I could do better and so, on completion of my

MBA, and after 17 years in Leicester, I started looking for new opportunities.

My time at Staffordshire University (née Polytechnic) is best described in the context of how I came to apply for my current job. How I got to my present job is fairly simple. I had never intended to look for a University Librarian post as I was thoroughly enjoying my job as Deputy Librarian, which I got at least partly on the back of that MBA and which remains the job where I most enjoyed getting up for work. I was in no hurry to leave because the Deputy's job is brilliant. You have loads of responsibility and power; you can kick as many backsides as you like, devise and build great plans and strategies and strut around passing yourself off as a very important person, but there is always someone above you to carry the can if, as is inevitable, you cock it up. You also have someone to blame if staff start criticising you because your grand plans have even less chance of success than a Norfolk ski resort. And I also had an excellent working relationship with my boss, who of course had no idea that I was blaming him for everything from the poorly planned refurbishments I was supposed to be responsible for to the fact that Port Vale had lost again on Saturday. So it was a bit of a shock when the boss came running into my office, almost tripping over himself in his eagerness, waving a job advert for the Coventry job and said, 'This is a job for you!' It was said in the kind of tone that suggested that he was very keen to see the back of me – and that perhaps he wasn't quite as ignorant as I imagined of how much I was blaming him for, whilst still wearing my best Teflon suit – and this was his calmly plotted response. I have always thought of it as a very postmodern way of getting rid of me without the unpleasantness of actually sacking someone: a sort of deconstructive dismissal!

Coventry was clearly going to be a challenge. It was the first job that I had inherited from someone with an intimidating reputation as a highly respected librarian. I knew this because even before I started at a social event on a visit I was welcomed by a charming but no-nonsense professor who informed me that they were proud of their excellent library. There are some who would say that I can on occasion be prone to paranoia, but I am quite sure that behind the charming smile his eyes said, '... so we don't want some cocky new upstart messing it up!'

After almost 16 years at Coventry others will have to decide whether or not I have indeed messed it up but in my defence I can point to a newish

library building about which people still say nice things, at least in my hearing, to excellent student-satisfaction ratings and reasonably happy staff, according to our most recent staff-satisfaction survey. I also like to think that the library is still as highly regarded as it was when I inherited it. On the other hand, the things I haven't achieved include operating for 20-odd years as a manager without establishing performance indicators anywhere I have worked, never really grasping the finer points of AACR or MARC and still breaking out in a cold sweat when I remember my embarrassment at asking in HMV if they stocked the latest Dublin Core record!! I can't boast the national achievements of some of our contemporary colleagues who have bestrode the profession, as I too have much to be modest about, but I was pleased to be involved in developing the current suite of management courses that will help in our succession planning for the future, and to have been involved in the creation of MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives) West Midlands at least, only for government ineptitude to induce spontaneous combustion – but at least we get to see synchronised swimming and water ballet at the London Olympics. If these don't leave an actual mark they may at least leave a faint if fading trail to mark my passage.

What has sustained me as a manager, though, for more than 20 years is a passionate belief in people and customers and a few simple management principles that I learned early on from the managers I respected and from my MBA and which I have developed through experience as the years have progressed. If you will indulge me just once more, I shall share those with you to end this article: partly so that the article will have at least some lasting value to the new generations of librarians who are forced to pick up the pieces from all the wreckage I have left behind and partly in a final desperate attempt to drum up consultancy opportunities.

Rule 1

All good managers have to have a vision, but not too many visions, otherwise you will be tested for psychotropic drugs or acute personality disorder and devoutly religious people will start making pilgrimages to your house.

Rule 2

Surround yourself with brilliant, able people who can help you realise your vision but make sure you watch your back or you will end up like Trotsky, ousted by your protégé, exiled to some

banana republic and never recovering from that splitting headache.

Rule 3

Have a good self-image and be honest about your abilities but not too honest. There are always plenty of colleagues who can list your faults at the drop of an appraisal without you owning up to all the ones they have missed.

Rule 4

Remember that people really are your most valuable asset and they respond best to care, affection and sympathetic treatment. Unfortunately they are also venal, irrational, unpredictable and often psychotic, so getting value from those assets is really tough. If after awhile they don't respond to the sympathetic approach make their lives miserable so they have to leave.

Rule 5

Listen and be sympathetic to all and any of your staff and all of their concerns, no matter how trivial they may appear to you. There is no easy rule to help you decide how much time you should spend listening. When your ears start to bleed you have probably done enough listening for one day, or you have inadvertently let in one of your cataloguers who is sharing their views on how to fully revise the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules.

If *their* ears start bleeding it is probably best if you stop banging their head on your office door quite so violently.

Rule 6

To justify all this time, of course, listening has to be active listening, showing that you are actively engaging with the concerns of your staff. The effect is completely ruined if you realise that despite the conversation starting with Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, for the last five minutes in your mind you have been drinking a wonderful chilled beer in a quiet bar in Barcelona.

And that's about the sum total of my wisdom after a career of more than 35 years. I don't know where those years have gone; all I know is my daughters have migrated from absolutely dying if they don't get that pair of Fairy Princess Primrose shoes to absolutely dying if I don't help with the deposit on the house or the Peugeot 206. You will have to ask my colleagues whether I am indeed better than those old librarians were or whether, as I increasingly suspect, I am slowly evolving into exactly that same kind of old inept librarian

whom everyone used to treat with such contempt at the start of my career. You can bet that somewhere out there is an aspiring and resentful former colleague of mine drafting an article that one day they hope to see published in *SCONUL Focus* about his or her career in which they make cheap disparaging comments about the old fart they used to work for who had the charm of Machiavelli and the ruthlessness of Mr Bean. But I won't mind – it will give me something to read in that bar in Barcelona, where I understand they are looking for postmen.

From Saturday assistant to Chartered Librarian: a case study in career development



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This is an account of how I progressed from Saturday assistant to team leader, at what is now the University of Lincoln. My career progression has not taken a conventional route, and I have tried to provide advice for those who want to change career, develop a library career alongside caring for a family or have chosen an indirect way of entering the library profession.

Fourteen years ago I was entering the final year of a degree in Humanities at the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside (now the University of Lincoln), having enjoyed the experience of returning to education but with no idea of what I might do next. Although I had done well in my 'O' levels many years previously, I had not been able to continue to 'A' levels due to family circumstances, so I had had a series of mundane shop jobs since leaving school. I felt ready to re-enter education in 1991, and enrolled on an 'Access to Higher Education' course, and followed this with the degree.

At the beginning of my final year in 1994, it suddenly struck me that I really ought to start thinking about my future career. I wanted to put the degree to some use as well as enjoying studying for it. Browsing the local newspaper one evening, I came across a job advertisement for a Saturday assistant at the university library. I had become well acquainted with the library during my studies. I considered it would be an interesting place in which to work, and I had been impressed with the serene atmosphere despite the constant activ-

ity. I mentioned my impression of serenity to the panel at my interview; they fell about laughing!

Despite my concern after the interview that I would be looked on as more suited to comedy than to library work, I was offered the post and I accepted. The job suited me well. I had plenty of time to study, could still drop off and collect my children from school and I thoroughly enjoyed my Saturday mornings shelving and tidying books. Although this was a routine, part-time job, I used the experience to find out more about the library profession, what the various roles entailed and the career paths and qualification routes that staff had undertaken to achieve their positions. I made a point of talking to the library staff and finding out more about how an academic library operates. They also encouraged me to shadow them on the issue and enquiry desks and I found the insight into their work intriguing and inspiring. I graduated in 1995, with the feeling that I would like a career in library work, but unfortunately I had to leave my post as I needed to find a full-time job to help with the household finances. I spent nine months as a dispensing assistant in a pharmacy (interesting, but not fulfilling) and then while browsing the local newspaper one evening I spotted an advertisement in the local paper for a library assistant at the university library – déjà vu! The post was full-time, which was ideal, as by this time my eldest son was ready to take on the responsibility of dropping off and seeing his brother home from school. I applied straight away, managed not to cause hilarity at the interview this time and was offered the post.

There was just one drawback with the post; at interview the Librarian had told me that there had been discussions concerning the closure of the campus, which looked likely. As no concrete decision had been made at that point, however, she was unable to say how long the post might last. I accepted it despite this warning, feeling sure that any amount of experience, no matter how short, would reap benefits. Once in post, I took advantage of opportunities to develop my career prospects when I could. The department was offering a NVQ programme in information and library studies under which I achieved a level 2 qualification. I also applied to undertake in-house training events where possible, and engaged with the progress development scheme. By collecting evidence and submitting a portfolio I was able to improve my grade in two consecutive years. I joined various departmental groups, which gave me the opportunity to contribute to wider departmental activities. By participating in

these additional, voluntary activities, I showed my managers that I was serious about developing a career – working in a library was not just a job. The campus closed four years later and well before then I had made up my mind that an academic library was the place I wanted to be.

During the final year of operations on my campus, the university had launched a new institution in Lincoln. As the time got nearer to my post ending, I was offered a transfer to the new campus. I accepted, but I knew I would have to reduce my hours because of the travelling time, and I was unsure whether the reduction in salary and the increase in transport costs might mean that the post would be unsustainable for me. In a fortuitous development, an opportunity came up at the new campus for a secondment to a more senior post, but it was full-time. I discussed my situation with my line manager, who was extremely supportive, and she suggested I should apply on a jobshare basis. I was unsure of my readiness for the post, as it was quite a step up from my post at the time, but I was able to show that I had taken on responsibility and had experience in a wide range of duties – an advantage of working on a small campus. I had also been very well mentored by the senior staff during my four years there. I was successful, so transferred into the higher position at Lincoln. When an opportunity came up to apply for the permanent position of team leader, I was ready for it, and was successful again.

After having been in this post for a while, I started to think about formalising my commitment to library work. My experience of NVQ had been positive, and I was keen to help others achieve qualifications under the scheme, so I undertook a D32/D33 assessor qualification, and experienced a brief spell as NVQ centre co-ordinator. I continue to find acting as an assessor very rewarding, and have thoroughly enjoyed guiding candidates through their first experiences of recognised library qualifications over the years.

Soon after achieving my D32/D33, I decided to upgrade my professional qualifications by embarking on a masters degree. I chose an MSc (Econ) by distance learning at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth as it gave me the option of setting my own pace of study to a reasonable extent. The degree was challenging but incredibly enjoyable and besides giving me the professional qualification I wanted, it also introduced me to areas of librarianship I had not experienced before. I chose optional study modules in records management and systems development to broaden my

knowledge, and gained a good grounding in all aspects of librarianship. I also ensured that I kept up to date with developments in the sector by reading professional journals (especially *SCONUL Focus!*!), by visiting other libraries and by belonging to professional online discussion groups.

My final goal on the road to becoming a fully fledged librarian was to undertake chartership. I had been thinking about this during my MSc studies, and I registered as soon as I had passed the postgraduate diploma part of my MSc. I found building my portfolio both interesting and challenging, and submitted my application 18 months after registering. I am delighted to have both graduated with my MSc (Econ) and to have been accepted as a chartered member of CILIP in 2008.

What are my tips for achieving career progression? I would encourage anyone thinking about developing their career not to think for too long, but to go for it. Leave your comfort zone and take advantage of any opportunity to gain additional experience, whether it is engaging in a short-term departmental project or accepting the challenge of a secondment to another role. Gain formal professional qualifications, and keep up to date. I have been fortunate to have supportive employers, as I have benefited from their advice and guidance and also with financial support for my studies. I am also indebted to my family for their support in the development of my career. It has taken some time, as I said at the beginning of this piece, fourteen years in all; and I am now a grandmother! However I am extremely happy with the choices I have made. I feel content and satisfied as a librarian, and my only regret is that I couldn't have achieved it sooner.

Skills for today's information professional

This is part of an occasional series of articles looking at essential skills for today's information professional.

If you feel you have valuable experience or know-how regarding management or professional issues – and would like to share your expertise with others by writing a short guide similar to the one below – we would be keen to hear from you.

Antony Brewerton
SCONUL Focus Editorial Team

The academic writing toolkit: writing for professional and peer-reviewed journals



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This article offers a step-by-step approach to writing an article. It aims to be a practical guide, with writing exercises, for library staff who have limited or no experience of writing for peer-reviewed and/or professional journals. It draws on my experience of facilitating academic writing workshops for library staff from Irish universities and for postgraduate students at NUI Maynooth. The nine sections cover the following:

- Section 1. Beginning to write
- Section 2. Ideas generation
- Section 3. Outlining
- Section 4. Abstract and title
- Section 5. Finding a journal
- Section 6. Writing the article
- Section 7. Submission
- Section 8. Peer-review and resubmission
- Section 9. Publication and celebration.

SECTION 1. BEGINNING TO WRITE

To begin writing you have to begin writing. That's not thinking about beginning: it's actually putting pen to paper or your fingers on the keyboard and getting words down. Here is a warm-up exercise.

Exercise – Writing to prompt

Write for ten minutes, without stopping, in sentences not bullets, beginning with one of the following prompts:

'I feel at my most creative at work when I'm ...'
'Something I would really love to write about is ...'
'My most interesting experience in my career to date was ...'.

It can be helpful to do a warm-up exercise (e.g. 'My next writing task is ...') each time you sit down to write, to get into the flow of writing.

Consult Rowena Murray for more on writing to prompt.¹

SECTION 2. IDEAS GENERATION

Writing generates ideas. You have to write to discover what you know.

Exercise – Finding a topic to write about

Do the following exercises fairly quickly:

List five issues/topics/experiences you would like to write about.

List five issues/topics/experiences you know a reasonable amount about.

List five issues/topics/experiences you think people would be interested in reading about.

Are there issues/experiences that are common to all three of the above? Pick one topic that interests you. Do the following clustering exercise.

Exercise – Clustering

Write your topic in the centre of a piece of paper, and draw a circle around it. Surround the topic with subtopics. Circle each and draw a line from it to the centre circle. Brainstorm more ideas. As you do this, connect each new concept to a subtopic already on the sheet, or make it a new subtopic. You will probably find there are many angles to your topic. Pick one specific aspect/angle. Writing projects often fail because they are too broad.

Consult Elaine P. Maimon for further guidance on clustering.²

Buy yourself an ideas notebook, small enough to carry about with you. I started this about eight years ago. It's surprising how much free time we

actually have – time on the train journey to work, time drinking coffee while waiting for friends, five or ten minutes here and there. You don't need lots of time to jot down ideas. You won't use all of these. You probably won't use many of them. It will get you into the habit of thinking about topics and teasing out ideas on paper. Remember, an idea is only an idea until you write it down. Reading helps generate ideas and also helps develop writing skills. Reading can be done anywhere, and with so many journals available electronically, printing an article to read on the bus or train from time to time shouldn't be too onerous.

Read more about finding ideas in Rachel Singer-Gordon.³

Some authors suggest that at this early stage you identify the journal you will submit to. If you wish to do this next, follow the guidance in section 5. I prefer to have an outline before identifying a publishing outlet.

SECTION 3. OUTLINING

When you have chosen your topic and your angle (remember: there are no new topics, just new angles) you can approach writing in different ways. Some writers, both academic and creative, write in a stream-of-consciousness fashion. Teachers of creative writing sometimes suggest you try to write the story from start to finish – not necessarily at one sitting – without editing. That can work for some. If you want to try this approach, limit yourself to about 2,000 words. Otherwise you may keep writing, bringing in new topics, new angles, new information as you go and finally ending up with a very large loose piece of writing that requires major editing in order to get a focus.

Most academic writers work from some type of structure/outline. Outlining allows you to order, categorise, sift, link and eliminate ideas. It allows you to contextualise and plan. Having an outline means you can view the structure of a 5,000-word article at a glance and dip into various sections when you have a short amount of time. This can make finding time to write a less daunting process.

The structure of an article will vary depending on the publication and type of article. Nick Joint offers useful suggestions on various types of article.⁴

Below are two suggested outlines – one for a peer-reviewed journal, the other for a professional journal.

Outline 1 – Peer-reviewed journal articles

- **Title** – This should include words that indicate the key theme of the article. If a subtitle is used, it should indicate the specific focus or argument.
- **Abstract** – This is a synopsis, not an introduction to the article. It should detail the essence of the article – its main arguments and findings – in clear and unambiguous terms, so that a potential reader knows what to expect.
- **Introduction** – This introduces the substantive content of the paper. It sets the scene and provides the reader with an insight into what is to follow. Normally it moves from the general to the specific.
- **Literature review** – It would be extremely rare for an article for a peer-reviewed journal to be so unique that it does not build on the work of others. The literature review should be highly selective and specific, referring to the work most relevant to the case being made. It should demonstrate that the author is familiar with thinking/debate around the topic. Abby Day⁵ offers straightforward guidance on how to approach a literature review.
- **Methodology/approach/conceptual framework** – This explains how the study was undertaken. It should detail exactly how any data were generated and the specific techniques used.
- **Analysis/results** – This should state clearly what the findings are and how they are being interpreted.
- **Discussion** – This folds together the previous sections, linking the findings from the research, the literature review and the author's own thinking on the topic.
- **Conclusion** – The conclusion draws the article to a close by summarising the rationale and findings, reaffirming the value of the research and suggesting how it might be developed further.
- **Bibliography** – This provides the references for material cited. It should follow the journal's guidelines on citation style.

Outline 2 – Professional/practitioner journal articles

Professional journal articles are different in style and content from peer-reviewed articles. They are

often based on practice and experience rather than research and have, generally, a bigger readership than peer-reviewed journals. Murray writes:

*'It is important to see the value in both types of journal and to consider, over the longer term, whether you could or should publish in both ... In practice, there are journals in some fields that bring the two together.'*⁶

She defines academic journals as research-based, with a small audience and placing a high value on theory. Professional journals, she suggests, reach a large audience and value practice and experience. There are journals that combine both research and experience, believing that the study of practice generates new knowledge, and they have a mixed audience.

A professional/practitioner journal article will generally have some or all of the elements listed below and may use different/additional headings:

- **Title**
- **Abstract**
- **Introduction/background/context**
- **Description**
- **Evaluation**
- **Reflection**
- **Conclusion**

The headings you use in your outline are likely to change as you progress through your article. It is useful to look at an article you consider to be very well-written. Look at the headings and subheadings. These give the article its structure.

Exercise – Filling in the blanks

Do a working outline for your article.

Under each heading, with the exception of the conclusion, write a few sentences, not bullets, beginning with 'This section will cover ...'.

Spending time planning and outlining rather than diving into writing will save time in the long run. Day suggests that:

*'The reason many aspiring authors fail is that they throw themselves immediately into the activity of writing without realizing it is the forethought, analysis and preparation that determine the quality of the finished product.'*⁷

More suggestions on techniques/methods of outlining can be found in Liane Reif-Lehrer,⁸ Murray,⁹ David Canter and Gavin Fairbairn¹⁰ and Day.¹¹

SECTION 4. WRITING AN ABSTRACT AND FINDING A TITLE

Having a working title and abstract is useful. This won't be your final title or abstract, but it will help you focus. Return to your title and abstract each time you read your draft and ask yourself whether the title reflects what you are writing about.

There are different types of abstract required for different journals. A basic informative abstract of about 60 words can later be redeveloped/restructured.

Exercise – Writing an abstract

Draw up a draft abstract of no more than 80 words. Think about the verbs you use. Don't use the same verb continually through the abstract. Consider the impact of the following verbs: asks, argues, covers, demonstrates, describes, discusses, educates, elucidates, evaluates, examines, expands, explores, identifies, maps, outlines, presents, proposes, promotes, reports, reviews, shows, suggests, summarises, surveys, synthesises.

Study the abstracts in journals you are considering approaching with your article. How long are they? What type of verbs do they use? How are they structured?

Day offers a succinct three-sentence method for writing an abstract, with Sentence One covering 'the purpose', Sentence Two 'the argument' and Sentence Three 'the findings'.¹²

SECTION 5. FINDING A JOURNAL

It's best not to write comprehensively and then plan to find an appropriate journal for your writing; rather, at an early stage, analyse journals you think might be suitable, see where your topic has been covered before and work out if you have a new angle. Read the guidelines for submissions, checking the website for the most recent guidelines. Consider whether you can write your article to suit a particular journal's requirements. Don't just look to the literature of librarianship. Journals in various disciplines may also be interested in articles on topics such as information sources in the discipline, information literacy and other issues of common concern to academics and librarians. If you are a subject librarian, talk to academics in your area. Ask what journals they think might be interested in an article on your topic. The following two prompts may help clarify

whether your article matches a journal's submission guidelines:

1. The purpose of my article is ...
2. The audience for my article is ...

When you have identified a potential journal, read a few recent previous issues. Check the website for the name of the editor. Your query email should be brief and should, in a few sentences, tell what you are writing about, why you think readers of the journal might be interested in this and about your expertise/experience in this area. It's unlikely that you will get a guarantee of publication following a query email to a peer-reviewed journal, unless you are very established in a field, but you may get an expression of interest in seeing the completed article. It can also be useful, and save time, if the editor explains why s/he feels, based on the information you have provided, that the article would not be suitable for the journal in question. If you get an expression of interest in seeing the finished paper, write thanking the editor and letting her/him know when it is likely to be completed. You will then have an actual commitment and deadline to motivate yourself. The requirements of the journal will help you shape and structure your writing.

*'Most papers fail because the writer has not considered the needs of the journal and its readers.'*¹³

Make yourself aware of the journal's position on copyright. Most peer-reviewed journals hold copyright of articles. They may allow archiving (pre-print or post-print) in an open access repository. Check out Project Romeo at www.sherpa.ac.uk to ascertain the policy of individual journals on self-archiving. Many professional journals give copyright to individual authors or will, on request, grant permission to deposit in an open access repository.

SECTION 6. WRITING THE ARTICLE

Go back to your outline. Select a section and begin writing. Don't try to write something perfect, just write. Every sentence you write, every word, can be revised later:

*"I just put down any sort of rubbish," a celebrated critic once remarked about his first attempts. And putting down rubbish is good advice ... the truth is that once a sentence is lying on the page, it is often shatteringly clear what is right and what is wrong with it. Put it down, and go on putting more of it down. Everything can be mended later.'*¹⁴

Remember that your first draft is just that – a first draft. Just concentrate on getting your ideas down. Write in full sentences. Confine each sentence to no more than one idea. Write in short sentences, thus avoiding the continuous use of 'and'. Don't look for perfection, just write. Write in sections, so that when you have a short period of time, say half-an-hour, you can work on a particular section. Don't worry about style in the first and second drafts.

Elizabeth Rankin makes the following useful suggestions regarding finding your writing voice:

*'If you find it difficult to write in the formal voice required in many academic and professional contexts, write your first drafts in a more relaxed, informal voice. After you've succeeded in getting your ideas down on paper, you can come back and tighten up your style ... don't get hung up on pronouns. If you like to write in the first person, go ahead and use it in your first drafts.'*¹⁵

Don't begin to revise and edit too early. Give yourself permission to write badly. Later, you can add polish and style. When you have a rough first draft – which usually won't have a conclusion at this stage – reread it and begin to add, remove and reorder text.

It can be helpful to save each draft of your article. This will give you 'the ecology' of the paper and, rather than deleting material, you may find that material in earlier drafts will become the basis of future articles. It is also a good idea to number and date each draft.

Consider the tense you use. Will your article be in the present or past tense? Can you use the continuous present instead of the past?

When you go on to the third and subsequent drafts give more attention to structure: that is, the arrangement of paragraphs and sentences. Keep related material together and have a logical movement from sentence to sentence, paragraph to paragraph and section to section. Remember you are a storyteller. Ask yourself how each sentence moves the story along. Do the paragraphs and sections flow easily or do they jolt from idea to idea? If your writing jolts, consider what types of connecting sentences you need. While not specifically related to academic writing, useful advice is offered by Clark on the nuts and bolts of writing – tenses, verbs, organisation of sentences and so forth.¹⁶

'The author Samuel Johnson once said, "what is written without effort is read without pleasure", and it is

often the most seemingly effortless prose that has been written, rewritten, scratched out, sweated over and rewritten again.¹⁷

Draft and redraft. When you feel your article is complete or close to completion, give it, and the guidelines for submission, to a colleague/critical friend. Tell the person the type of feedback you require. Is it on the content, the style, the suitability for a particular journal? Take on board any relevant suggestions.

Leave the paper aside for at least a week. Reread. Reread first for content, then reread for style. Edit. Proofread. Ensure all your references are in the format required by the journal and that the layout is consistent and matches the requirements of the journal.

SECTION 7. SUBMISSION

*'There are only two types of articles; those that are perfect and never get published, and those that are good enough and do.'*¹⁸

At a certain point, painful though it may be, you have to let go of your article.

Reread the submission guidelines. Reproof your article. Submit it according to the journal's guidelines.

Most journals acknowledge receipt of an article. In the case of a professional journal, the editor/editorial board will make a decision relatively quickly. S/he or an editorial team may do some editing of the article. Depending on the frequency of publication, the lead-in time to publication is usually a few months. In the case of a peer-reviewed journal, there is a more detailed process and the lead-in time is generally much longer. The procedure for peer-review is outlined in the next section.

SECTION 8. PEER-REVIEW

Editors are reluctant to waste the time of referees, who give their services free of charge, so they will generally indicate quickly if an article is not suitable for publication. If the article is considered potential material for the journal, it will be sent for peer-review. This process will vary depending on journal, but will generally be at least two to three months.

Just as there are guidelines for submission, referees are also given guidelines. Kitchin and Fuller

give the following guidelines on judging criteria referees may be asked to use:

- Does the paper fit the aims and brief of the journal?
- Is the topic of the paper interesting and pertinent for the journal's readership?
- Does the paper make a significant new contribution to the literature?
- Does the paper display sound scholarship?
- Is the paper clearly written and well structured?
- Is the paper of an appropriate length?¹⁹

Once the editor receives the reviewers' comments s/he will read the paper again and make a decision. This may be to accept the paper as it is (this is rare in the case of a peer-reviewed journal); accept with revisions (in this case the paper need not be seen by a referee again); ask the author to revise and resubmit (referees will generally be asked to re-evaluate); or reject.

If your paper is rejected you need to find another outlet and rewrite for it, taking into account the audience, length, style and so forth.

If asked to revise and resubmit, go through the suggestions. Make the changes, unless you feel there is a valid reason for not doing so. Reread and reproof the full article. Resubmit. Point out where you have made the changes in your email to the editor. If you have not taken a suggestion of the referees on board, explain why.

Read more about the peer-review process in Day,²⁰ Joint²¹ Kitchin,²² Murray²³ and Gilmore, Cason and Perry.²⁴

SECTION 9. PUBLICATION AND CELEBRATION

The editor may give you one or more copies of the journal in which your article is published. Copyright permitting, deposit your article in your institutional archive, assigning appropriate keywords.

Finally, celebrate your success!

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Peer observation and information skills teaching: feel the fear and do it anyway!

The introduction of peer observation at the University of East London



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INTRODUCTION

Whilst acting-up as academic services and skills manager in the summer of 2007, I was charged by the director of library and learning services at UEL (University of East London) with introducing peer observation within service. Peer observation of teaching was already in place in various schools of the university, but it was an entirely new practice for us.

As subject librarians, we are involved in the learning and teaching process, but our activities and interactions don't always receive the attention of more traditionally recognised staff/student contact such as lectures and seminars. Information skills sessions seemed a natural starting place for the introduction of peer observation since the sessions are structured, time-limited and easy to observe. As a library service committed to playing a key part in enabling a high-quality student experience, we saw peer observation as one way we could develop as teachers and thereby provide a better teaching experience for our students.

PEER OBSERVATION IN THE UNIVERSITY

I decided that I should have an initial discussion with the director of learning and teaching at UEL to obtain the necessary policy documents and to discover how the schools were currently implementing peer observation. The conversations I had with her, both verbally and via e-mail, were both helpful and illuminating.

She provided me with the university's policy statement on peer observation, which begins:

'Peer Observation is part of our commitment to enhancement of Learning and Teaching. It provides for self reflection and improvement with the aid of support and advice from peers acting in the capacity of a critical friend.'

She was keen to stress that the bulk of the document was meant simply as a guideline for peer observation and that the concept of a 'critical friend' encapsulated the spirit of the process. Schools had adopted the process with varying degrees of rigour and enthusiasm, but she was concerned that, on occasion, the reasons behind the practice – meant as a developmental process – had become 'lost' to a tick-box exercise where colleagues weren't necessarily being viewed in their envisaged role as critical friend and partner. This was a useful warning to me as to the sensitivity surrounding the introduction of a colleague into your classroom.

The policy states that peer observation should take place a minimum of once each semester for academic staff and twice a year for support staff. How this happens is left to the discretion of the school/service. The director encourages staff to develop a peer observation process that works for them, so long as the chosen method is used constructively and consistently across each school/service, and a peer observation proforma is used to guide reflection on teaching practice.

Whilst we could have created our own proforma had we so wished, included in the policy guidelines were examples of two proformas as developed by two schools of the university. The first of these had three sections: context and duration of observation; evidence; and strengths and targets for development. It seemed to me to be a bit 'blunt' and unfocussed for our purposes. I preferred instead the second proforma, as derived from that used in the business school. This one had a checklist for different aspects of the teaching session: introduction; planning and organisation; methods/approach; delivery and pace; content; use of learning resources; and summary. Faced with a situation that was new to us all, I felt we would appreciate a checklist of areas to comment on; as we developed in skill and confidence, so we could begin to take our lead from 'the observed' as to those particular areas of their practice where they would welcome feedback.

CONCERNS ABOUT OBSERVATION

Armed with my new-found knowledge of the policy's intentions and of university-wide practice (and potential areas of difficulty), I began to consider how to introduce this initiative to the subject librarian team. Even though the process had been given to me to progress as a 'required' development rather than one which was up for debate, I truly believed it could act as a useful aid to development. However, I also understood that it might be something that would cause anxiety amongst some members of the team.

In June 2007, I chaired a subject librarian meeting and told tale of this new and exciting thing which was afoot. Colleagues believed the 'new' bit; it was the 'exciting' that I needed to work on! Several people looked immediately worried, and, when analysed, the concerns seemed to fall into the three primary reasons for hesitation that Mento and Giampetro-Meyer identify when discussing higher education faculty:

*'Firstly, many of us question the context in which peer evaluation would take place. We wonder about the spirit and attitude surrounding peer evaluation. Second, most professors wonder about the content of the evaluation. We want to know what our peers will be observing ... Third, many of us want to know more about the process. How will our peers respond to us and give us feedback? What will the department expect us to do after we receive the feedback?'*¹

Several reassurances could be given immediately: that feedback would be confidential, shared only between the observed and the observer, with a copy passed to the academic services and skills manager, who has a remit for directing and co-ordinating the activities of the team (not to the individuals' line-managers); that the process and resulting feedback were entirely unconnected to the PDR (annual appraisal scheme); that training would be given beforehand; that we would – where feasible – be able to select our own observers and that this person could be either another subject librarian or an academic colleague if preferred; that the process was formative rather than summative; that the observed could choose the session/s they wanted their observer to attend.

Other reassurances were simply beliefs on my part, which I truly hoped I would be proved right about: that we could all learn from each other; that we all knew how to provide sensitive feedback to students in a classroom situation and this same sensitivity would extend to the feedback

we gave colleagues; that we would not be sitting in judgement of each other; that the experience would prove a positive one.

I was keen to engage with the process for several reasons. Firstly, as Samson and McCrea rightly point out:

*'Library instruction has a unique place in undergraduate and graduate education, yet academic librarians often begin or extend their participation in an instruction program with little teaching experience and/or training.'*²

Most of us have 'learnt on the job', with the majority of us having actually observed very few – if any! – information skills sessions prior to finding ourselves in front of a group of expectant students! Our practice is therefore often developed the hard way, with our knowledge of the learning and teaching process developing in tandem with our delivery (rather than being used to inform the delivery in the first place). Whilst experience counts for a lot and usually brings us to a place where we feel reasonably happy with various aspects of our teaching, I for one certainly felt that exposure to another person's ways of doing things would be a useful and motivating experience. Secondly, teaching can often feel quite a lonely activity, and from previous experience of team-teaching I knew that having another 'adult' in the classroom felt quite nice! Thirdly, engaging with peer observation would raise the profile of the library service within the university.

Whilst peer observation has the potential to provide a supportive environment in which to improve our skills, it is important to allow that people will be concerned, apprehensive and quite possibly scared. Ample time should be set aside to answer questions and address concerns, and bringing in staff from schools and services with an existing knowledge and experience of peer observation is an essential part of this preparatory period.

In July 2007, the academic services and skills manager returned to work and made arrangements for a peer observation training session to be run by UEL's staff-development manager. After an instructive two-hour session in August of last year, we were ready to put what we had learnt into practice!

I asked a colleague whom I trusted, and who I felt would provide me with honest and considered feedback, if she would be willing to act as my observer. She agreed and, as she was also happy for me to observe *her* teaching, we became a 'peer pair'. The peer observation agenda had been somewhat sidelined by the craziness that is Semester A, so by the time we came to plan our observations, it was the beginning of Semester B (February 2008). On reflection, I feel this was no bad thing for our first round of peer observation. There is already an amount of pressure surrounding the sheer volume of information skills delivery at UEL between September and November, and including peer observation in with this would have done little to alleviate the anxiety that some colleagues were already feeling.

It was decided that my colleague would observe a 90-minute induction and information skills session that I was due to give to a group of Masters students in mid-February. I chose this session because it was fairly typical of those sessions I provide for taught postgraduates and also because, like most other subject librarians, we were trying to get two sessions observed at a stage in the academic year when teaching engagements were still plentiful.

We met before the session to agree certain boundaries and for me to explain various things about the session. This pre-session meeting covered:

- who the students were and whether or not I had taught them before (on this occasion, I had not)
- the type of session I would be leading (combined induction and information skills for Semester B starters)
- how I would introduce my observer to the class (as a colleague who had come to observe me, not them!)
- how I would like my observer to behave (sit unobtrusively towards the back of the class and play no part in the session regardless of what happened)
- any problems that I anticipated / areas I would like my observer to concentrate on (none anticipated and, as this was the first observation, a general overview would be fine)
- when I would receive feedback (briefly immediately after the session, and then more fully on the completed proforma which

would be sent for comment and agreement within a week of the teaching session).

And so the information skills session was observed, and within five minutes I had all but forgotten that my colleague was in the class! I don't believe that the session I led was any different from the one I would have delivered had she not been there. As with all activities which demand your absolute attention, so teaching focusses you on the students you have in front of you and on the activity in hand. It was only as I was finishing up that I remembered that my teaching was about to be commented on!

Our peer observation training had given us some useful pointers regarding feedback: start the de-brief by asking the tutor how they felt the session went then give a few minutes of immediate feedback, emphasising the positive and never giving more than three bits of 'bad' feedback. Sound advice.

After this initial observation, I went on to observe my colleague during a 60-minute information skills session for some first-year undergraduates and during a 90-minute session that she led for a small group of dissertation-level students. She observed me teaching the final session (of three) that I had delivered to students on a first-year undergraduate skills module. We continued with the same pre-session agreements and arrangements we had previously put in place.

The experience proved to be a positive one for us both. Guided by the question 'What is good teaching?', the answer we arrived at was that 'good teaching' can be many different things and can be achieved in many different ways. People teach differently, but 'difference' isn't a barrier to learning; in fact it is quite the opposite. We know that people learn in different ways and that different activities are suited to different learning styles. When done properly, peer observation can give librarians confidence in their way of doing things and can give the observer some good ideas to implement in their own practice.

Perhaps the most unexpected result of peer observation is that the observer gets as much out of the process as the person being observed.

EVALUATION OF OUR EXPERIENCE

I have now changed jobs so can't say for sure that the process of peer observation isn't now receiving closer evaluation. However, at my time of

leaving UEL, I felt that more attention could have been given to how we as a team felt the process had gone, how we felt the process could be improved and how/if we would like to extend our 'peering' to other subject librarian activities. Whilst those colleagues I spoke to about their experience of peer observation seemed happy with the ways things had gone, this may not have been the case for *all* colleagues. A meeting convened after all librarians had been observed twice could have acted as a forum for pooling our thoughts, refining the process and deciding future directions.

SOME REFLECTIONS

When introducing quality measures such as peer observation, it strikes me that wording plays a vital role in projecting the correct intention of peer activities. Words to be avoided at all costs include 'appraisal', 'scrutiny', 'judged', 'evaluated'. Words to be encouraged include 'partnership', 'skill development', 'effective teaching' and 'reflective practice'. I would also argue for 'the observer' and the 'observed' in preference to 'the reviewer' and 'the reviewed'. Indeed, I think Cardiff University sums the process up nicely by describing it as 'Peer-assisted Reflection of Learning and Teaching' (PRLT).³

Whilst a structured approach needs to be taken to peer observation, the process itself should not become part of the annual performance appraisal structure. In order to stay true to the spirit of the venture, it seems vital to me that it should be used for developmental purposes only. Using the process solely for the on-going development of the skills of the observer and the observed will improve 'buy-in', lessen suspicion that it is 'yet another management tool' designed to uncover poor performance and lead to the desired end result: the modification and improvement of our teaching practice.

As long as control over the process resides with the teaching librarian – choosing their own observer, deciding which sessions the observer should attend, negotiating those areas they would like the observer to concentrate on – my hopes for the future of peer observation remain high. Ideas for future development might include: adapting the feedback form; looking at other areas which could lend themselves to peer-review – teaching materials, enquiry desk services and so on; and maybe even incorporating student feedback into the process, through use of evaluation forms completed at the end of the teaching session.

CONCLUSION

The quality of our teaching should form part of a general 'quality audit' of our library provision and should be formally, frequently and systematically reviewed via processes such as peer observation. Equally important is that 'teaching quality' should be considered before, during and after each and every information skills session we deliver.

To stop reflecting on practice, and to fail to consider that we can learn from colleagues, is detrimental to development – both our own and the library services'. Peer observation has taught me that subject librarians at UEL use different methods, styles and techniques to deliver information skills sessions but that no one way is the way, no one librarian is the best teacher. Some things work, some things don't, some things simply require 'tweaking' to work better. Having a 'critical friend' pop by and give helpful suggestions and comments can aid continual improvement, increase confidence and re-invigorate the whole teaching process.

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Managing, marketing, maximising: creating an information resources development policy to further academic–library relations



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This article outlines the development of a school information resources development policy and illustrates how these policies can be used to further liaison among academic libraries, to market library resources to our users and to ensure that library purchases accurately reflect the teaching and research needs of each school.

Information resource development policies provide a method to constructively and progressively review library subscriptions, enabling librarians to reassess and reprioritise key books, journals and databases. University College Dublin is Ireland's largest university and the library supports the users of 35 schools, representing humanities, arts, human and social sciences, business, law, life sciences, health sciences, engineering and physical sciences. To actively manage the information resources available to the university's students and staff, the associate librarian for resources and information (who is a member of the library's senior management team) initiated a project to create a template document which could be piloted with two schools and then rolled out to the remaining schools. The creation of individual school policies would align the resource develop-

ment strategies undertaken by individual liaison librarians (who are responsible for subject and resource support) to the library's overall information resources development policy.¹ Each librarian would also be able to tailor the policies to fit the requirements of the individual schools while still operating within the guidelines provided by the library-wide policy.

POLICY TITLE

The title 'information resource development' was deliberately used instead of 'collection development' to encompass all formats purchased by the library and to suggest a more flexible approach to the user-driven purchase of resources. Because many UCD teaching librarians are currently promoting the delivery of embedded information skills training, using 'information' as the common term in all library efforts to develop resources (either through purchase, promotion or training) creates a synergy and ease of communication in all liaison activities.

DEVELOPING A TEMPLATE

To prioritise this initiative appropriately, it was decided to create the role of project manager and I was appointed to this post in April 2008, prior to taking up my current job. The specific brief was to create a template policy and pilot it with the school of English, drama and film and the school of medicine and medical science. The choice of such different schools in which to pilot this policy was deliberate, as it was to reflect the huge variety of resources required by these schools – English requires extensive primary sources via print and e-book purchases, while medicine is driven by evidence-based requirements that reflect academic and practitioner needs. As project manager, I drew up a template policy document based on a literature search² and review of existing policies on the internet.³ I then met with each liaison librarian and his/her manager and a meeting was set up with the head of school (or designated nominee) to discuss the process. In conjunction with the relevant liaison librarian, a draft was produced and reviewed by all parties. These drafts were e-mailed for comment and each draft was clearly numbered. The policy was driven by a number of considerations including:

- identification of appropriate minimum levels for resource collections
- frequency of subscription reviews
- gaps in key areas
- growth in interdisciplinary research

- demands of specific module requirements on resources.

These project drivers reaffirmed the demands placed on library resources, particularly at undergraduate level. Each policy was to be based upon the template document but liaison librarians could tailor it appropriately, giving more or less emphasis to each section as determined by user needs, budget allocation and individual schools' requirements. The final policy was agreed, signed off and added to a specially created page on the library website.⁴ Each school was encouraged by the relevant librarian, as part of the policy rollout, to display the policy on its own website, and to date both schools have done this.

SELLING THE PROCESS

To ensure that liaison librarians and their managers had an overview of the entire process, I then presented the documents to the entire cohort of liaison librarians and provided support documentation detailing the above process and outlining how liaison librarians themselves can act as project managers and can lead the development of these policies with the schools. Guidelines on how to manage the timeline, who guides the process and how to get the policy signed off were included in this presentation and I remain available for background information or assistance to any liaison librarian who requires further information on managing the process.

A certain amount of 'marketing' to the schools is required and the benefits of an information resources development policy to the school can include:

- assistance with resource evaluation in light of the school's strategic priorities
- a better understanding of the school's teaching and research needs
- identification and promotion of little-used but content-rich resources within the existing collection
- provision of further opportunities for constructive dialogue between librarian and school on proactive resource management
- creation and development of synergies and linkages with other related and interdisciplinary areas in the library
- creation of a unified framework of collection-building priorities within which to support and enhance the research and teaching in affiliated centres.

Academics are invited to detail their school's research and teaching specialisations and particular resources can be highlighted and promoted via the policy. A commitment to provide information skills training is also included in both pilot documents. This may seem an unusual segment to itemise in a resource development policy, but a statement regarding the intent to organise information skills training provides a guarantee that the resources will be appropriately profiled and therefore a 'value for money' provision is built into the purchase of resources.

CONCLUSIONS

The creation of these policies was illuminating and honest! Writing a resource development policy illustrated the positives and negatives of the library's relationship with each of the pilot schools, identifying key areas for growth. Librarians can showcase to academics the range of resources available to their individual students, which may not necessarily fall within the subject resources allocated to their school, for example, identification of titles of interest to a range of disciplines via our journal packages and general reference resources. This plethora of interdisciplinary and other subject-specific services and resources offered by the library to all our users is often unknown to academics and the development of these policies can help with the promotion of current library resources. Schools' information resources development policies are not designed to be window-dressing but represent a practical and in some cases innovative approach to resource allocation, academic-library partnership and support for resource use. The school became far more aware of the impact of evolving degree programmes, the introduction of new modules and the implementation of new pedagogical practices on the library and its resources. The library in turn learned more about the pressures under which academics were placed when it came to module/programme design, the introduction of new courses and any change in personnel within a programme. The academics also became more aware of the role their support librarians play in the school's activities. This in turn created an environment where the academics became more open to the inclusion of librarians on school committees, thereby enhancing the school liaison librarians' awareness of developments in teaching and learning in each school.

The economic climate of 2008 makes the itemisation of library spend on resources based on school priorities more relevant than ever and the

creation of these policies means UCD's library has a transparent and constructive method to ensure a fair spread of library resources for all our users. Although the process is in the early stages of creation, having individualised policies for each school will facilitate the liaison librarians' efforts to foster new working relationships and will strengthen existing ones with the academics. Detailed school-by-school policies will also help to actively manage the print and electronic resources strategically, and in support of all our users across the university.

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Hidden treasures revealed at Liverpool John Moores University



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In November 2008 learning and information services (LIS) at Liverpool John Moores University hosted an evening reception to celebrate the opening of new accommodation for Special Collections and Archives and the launch of Digital Collections and Archives. In an innovative collaboration, we have been working in partnership with the faculty of media, arts and social sciences (MASS) to develop a shared working environment supporting all aspects of special collections and archives development. The new facility will create a focus for research activities, preservation, cataloguing and the expansion of the existing collections and future digitisation projects. Building and renovation work is being carried out in three phases, in parallel with the development of digital collections in the institutional repository.



LJM University new archives consultation room

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

LJM University has a number of unique special collections, including the Everyman Theatre Archive, the 'England's Dreaming' punk archive, the Stafford Beer collection in management cybernetics and the Liddell Hart fashion collection. The research interests of the faculty include British theatre, popular music, British social history, journalism,

new media and youth culture. In collaboration with the academic staff, LIS has developed the special collections broadly around the theme of popular culture, recently acquiring the Ray Coleman Beatles interview tapes and a complete set of the *International Times* underground newspaper, with associated management papers. Prior to the start of the new development, the accommodation for special collections was cramped and difficult for users to access, with no room for expansion.



Logo for *International Times the underground newspaper*

JOINT ARCHIVES DEVELOPMENT

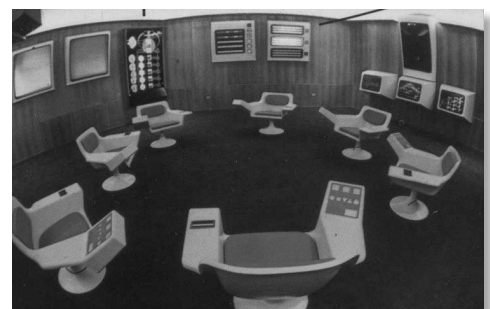
In 2004 staff in the faculty successfully bid for Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) resource enhancement funding to catalogue and carry out preservation work on the Everyman Theatre Archive. At around the same time, LIS purchased the DigiTool software from Ex Libris and began creating the LJMU institutional repository, now called LJMU Digital Collections. At the end of the Everyman project, the catalogue was successfully loaded into DigiTool. This was one of a number of LIS/MASS collaborations and there was interest on both sides in creating the right conditions to increase activity. The faculty had been successful in securing funding for research infrastructure in the 2001 research assessment exercise and expressed willingness to work with LIS to create new space for archives development. LIS agreed to house the accommodation by repurposing existing space and bidding for additional adjacent space. The faculty committee that manages research infrastructure funding provided most of the money for the redevelopment, supplemented by funding from the university's property services department.

THE NEW ARCHIVES FACILITY

Phase 1 of the development took place in the summer of 2007. Two adjacent spaces in the Aldham Roberts LRC (Learning Resources Centre) were refurbished to create an archives consultation area, storage space with compact shelving and improved reading-room space in

the American Studies Resources Centre. This has greatly enhanced access for users of the collections. Phase 2, completed in the summer of 2008, was a much bigger project: to expand the archive storage areas, including climate control, and to create a researchers' work room, a professional sound studio and staff social space. This is where much of the research and development work will take place, including digitisation (print, microform, images, sound and video), cataloguing, preservation and sound recording and editing. The sound studio was delivered as a stand-alone soundproof room and adjacent digital mixing and editing tools. Phase 3 of the development will be carried out as part of the overall refurbishment of the Aldham Roberts LRC in 2009 and will provide accommodation for the LIS digitisation team, currently working in a separate building. When this is complete, research, technical and professional staff will be housed close together in well-designed accommodation, with space for additional staff to work on specific projects. It is envisaged that the new facility will contribute to collaborative working between LIS and the faculty, and increase the potential to attract research funding.

The launch event in November was designed to celebrate the completion of the main phases of the project and to raise awareness of the collections. I worked closely with Emily Burningham, the LIS archivist, staff from the digital collections team, the university's marketing department and a local public relations company, to create new promotional materials. These included new brochures and factsheets featuring images from the eight main collections, a set of postcards, pull-up display banners, a customised Rubik's cube to give to guests and a very eye-catching invitation to the launch evening using a pair of cotton archive gloves which the guests were encouraged to wear when touring the archives. It was a really enjoyable evening, particularly as around 20 LIS staff volunteered to help out by leading tours, designing new posters, providing flowers and

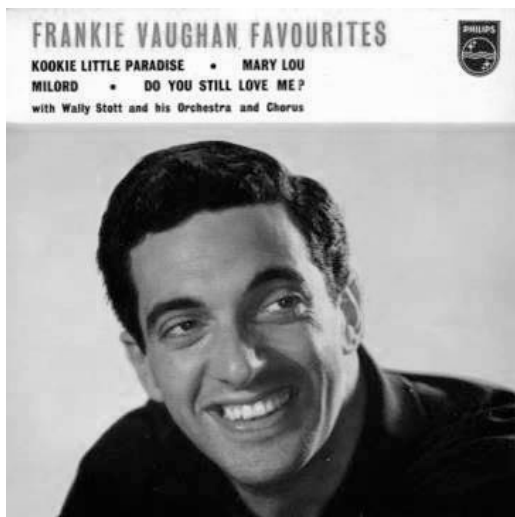


Control centre designed by Stafford Beer for the Chilean economy in the 1970s



Poster for the original production of Shirley Valentine at the Everyman Theatre.

balloons, creating the soundtrack for the Power-Point and contributing ideas for the themed buffet ('Liddell tarts', 'Sex'n'drugs'n'sausage rolls' and Shirley Valentine cocktails). The guests included the Vice-Chancellor and other senior university managers, Aldham and Avril Robarts (who gave their names to our learning resource centres and are very active supporters of university activities), staff from the local libraries, museums and archives and Phil Redmond, creative director of Liverpool's European Capital of Culture activities. Feedback from the attendees has been extremely positive and we will build on the success of the launch by developing the connections and



Frankie Vaughan album cover

partnerships we have made, inviting more students and staff into the new accommodation and building on the foundations that have been laid to apply for more development funding in partnership with the faculty. The first researchers are just starting work in the new research room as I write and we have been offered a number of interesting archives to sit alongside the existing collections. Revealing the hidden treasures of the university has already been very rewarding and we would be happy to share our experiences with anyone who is interested in our activities:

LJMU Special Collections and Archives: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/lea/77343.htm>

LJMU Digital Collections: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/lea/83096.htm>.

Exploiting special collections: using digital methods to enhance their research and learning potential

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In this article I review how the expanding digital environment is impacting on special collections within academic libraries by exploring some examples of digital projects within the John Rylands University Library of the University of Manchester (JRUL) and also elsewhere. I will consider very briefly what the future might hold for special collections as technology continues to open up opportunities and challenges for collection management and access.

THE JRUL SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The special collections of the JRUL provide rich resources for researchers in the humanities.¹ They originate from three foundation libraries: the John Rylands Library, Deansgate; the Library of Owens College, later the Victoria University of Manchester; and the Joule Library at UMIST (University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology). The John Rylands Library was founded in the 1890s by Mrs Henriqueta Rylands, as a memorial to her husband, John, one of the most successful cotton entrepreneurs of the mid-nineteenth century. She purchased the printed book collection of the 2nd Earl Spencer and the collection of manuscripts assembled by the 25th and 26th Earls of Crawford and Balcarres as core collections for the library. She herself added many further fine books and manuscripts. In the 1920s, the library first acquired archive collections in the form of family muniment collections. The library now holds the archives of numerous organisations including

commercial companies, businesses, charities and religious institutions. The University of Manchester was founded as Owens College in 1851. The printed book collection of Richard Copley Christie (with its strength in Italian Renaissance books) together with that of Edward Freeman (rich in material on European medieval history) formed the main foundation for the college library in the 1890s. Strengths in special holdings relating to medicine and science reflect the research orientation of the university over the twentieth century. Similarly, the special collections of the former UMIST library focus on the history of science and technology.

RESOURCE DISCOVERY

One of our core functions is to provide access to these resources for as many researchers as we possibly can. First of all, and most basically, we need to tell our potential readers what we have that is available to them. Increasingly our readers regard the internet rather than the physical library as the source of all collection descriptions. If a record describing a book, manuscript or archive is not easily found, preferably through a Google search, then for many readers that resource simply does not exist.

In the 1990s, we benefited enormously from funding made available through the Higher Education Funding Council for England for retrospective conversion of card catalogues, and as a result most of our printed books have electronic records that can be searched through the JRUL web-based catalogue or through COPAC. However, we still have collections of material for which the principal finding aid is the card catalogue. The largest collection in this category is our collection of medical printed books dated between 1800 and 1950. The origin of this collection lies with the Manchester Medical Society, founded in 1834. This collection contains many rare and important items, including first editions of the works of Xavier Bichat, Claude Bernard and others. The collection is particularly rich in continental editions and features an impressive range of titles in the German language. Many would regard it as the best collection of printed material for the history of medicine between Oxford and Edinburgh. It is currently housed in a closed-access store and use is sadly very low. I suspect many researchers are simply not aware of its existence.

We also have a large collection of printed material associated with the history of Methodism, which is also not described by a comprehensive elec-

tronic catalogue and is thus also very difficult to use. This collection was deposited in the library in 1977 and comprises periodicals, books and pamphlets, including material arguing against the ideas of John and Charles Wesley and other early reformers. It contains primary source material for historians of Protestant Nonconformity and is also heavily used by family historians searching for their Methodist ancestry.

I could go on with lists of other equally significant collections. And I am sure we are not alone in having cataloguing backlogs. It is difficult to develop proposals to address these problems as it has become increasingly difficult to secure funding for projects that focus entirely on either retrospective conversion of card catalogues or book-in-hand cataloguing. Programmes of external funding tend to take a dim view of 'simple' electronic cataloguing programmes and expect applicants to devise ways of adding value to the research material – as if the intrinsic historical value is not enough for the academic community. The consequence is that current externally levered investment in the most basic of resource-discovery tools, the electronic catalogue record, is very low indeed. As a result, in a tight internal financial environment, collections that have enormous research potential are simply hidden from readers.

We do promote our resources at collection level also and there are many collection-level descriptions on the web-site.² Could cataloguing for printed books at this level provide a more general solution to the lack of investment in item-level descriptions? The problem with printed books in a closed-access library comes, however, when the readers arrive wanting to know exactly what items are in the collection so that they can decide what to order. We cannot allow readers to browse the shelves and so collection-level descriptions are really inadequate for printed-book resource-discovery.

The 'Access to Archives' project³ and the higher education archives hub⁴ are playing a significant role in making archive and manuscript collections better known and better used, by disseminating electronic archive catalogues. We are grateful to the Wellcome Fund for Resources in Medical History for enabling us to create a number of detailed catalogues for archival material relating to the history of medicine. And indeed we are fortunate in employing archivists within our permanent staff who spend a large proportion of their time cataloguing. However, as with printed books, there is also a significant number of collections for which

there is no electronic finding aid. Collection-level descriptions are publicised and for archives they form an important component of resource-discovery for our readers. It could be argued that a collection-level description with a good box list is sufficient. However, archivists assure me that in an ideal world what researchers want is a detailed catalogue as well, so that they have both the big picture provided by the collection description and the details of each item.

As libraries are forced to consider ways of adding value to resource discovery there is increasing focus on finding ways of uncovering the links between collections, and between individual items within collections, in order to encourage new research questions to be posed and, indeed, answered. The database of Italian academies at the British Library provides an outstanding example of this type of work.⁵ Professor Jane Everson of the Italian studies department at Royal Holloway, University of London, and Denis Reidy at the British Library have together developed a database of information associated with the Italian academies, 1530–1650, incorporating records harvested from the British Library catalogue. The database is searched independently of the main catalogue. Searches result in information about people, networks and publications as well as catalogue records associated with books, manuscripts and archives in the British Library collections. Research that was done in the preparation of the database has been used to enhance the book records, with further details associated with each particular academy. This approach is ideal for a set of loosely linked individuals and institutions but it could also be applied to research themes and provides a transferable method of creating pathways through databases. For example, it could work for the Dissenting academies established from the mid-eighteenth century in England, which provided such an important example for the modernization of higher education later in the nineteenth century.

DIGITAL SURROGATES

Resources such as 'Early English Books On-line' and 'Eighteenth Century Collections On-line' have provided researchers with digital surrogates of vast numbers of printed material from 1473 onwards. Is there anything more for special collections librarians to do, therefore, in terms of digitisation of print resources? Of course: copies of books printed before 1701 should be treated as unique in bibliographical terms. And, generally speaking, the earlier the printing the more indi-

vidual each copy becomes. An enormous amount of information lies in the differences between copies. It therefore follows that many surrogates of copies of significant titles could provide a digitally convenient way to compare and collate and so extract that research information. There can be no more significant title than the Bible printed by Johann Gutenberg in Mainz in 1455, the first book to be produced by moveable metal type. In February 2008, JRUL hosted a team from Keio University's 'Humanities Media Interface' (HUMI) project for three weeks while they created very high-quality images of each page of this sacred text. The JRUL Bible is the final piece in the Gutenberg jigsaw that the research team at Keio, led by Professor Toshiyuki Takamiya, have been piecing together over the past ten years or so.⁶ The team began by producing images of the copy of the Bible purchased by Keio University in the mid-1990s. Since then they have photographed the British Library's two copies and the Bury Bible at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, as well as the copy at the diocesan library in Pelplin, Poland. The Keio team have shown how software and digital images together can provide easier and more productive ways of collating these copies.

Another example of 'surrogate provision' is the Darwin Online project.⁷ This aims to provide access to Charles Darwin's complete publications, including a surrogate first edition of *The origin of species*, as well as 20,000 private papers, together with numerous examples of supporting material. This massive undertaking involved sending copies of Cambridge University's microfilms of Charles Darwin's private papers to India where 90,000 electronic images were scanned and cropped. Basing the project on microfilm has resulted in black-and-white digital images. This doesn't seem to have adversely affected the response, which has exceeded the expectations of project director John van Wyhe. There was wide coverage of the project's launch in the media but it was the traffic on the web-site that was so impressive. On 17 April 2008, launch day, there were 7 million hits on the web-site. On 18 April, there were 8 million. From 17 to 30 April over 20 terabytes of data were uploaded (1 terabyte is 1000 gigabytes). On 17 April alone 14,000 PDFs of the first edition of *The origin of species* were downloaded. One of the astounding statistics that John van Wyhe recounts is that more copies of Darwin's works were distributed in 48 hours than in the whole of the nineteenth century. There can be no doubt about the power of the internet.

However, Darwin and Gutenberg are historical giants, central to the canon, and as such they are exceptions deserving comprehensive treatment when it comes to digitisation. There are of course others in this category, and at JRUL we can identify collections for which the comprehensive approach is the only way to yield the true research potential of a collection. But is comprehensive digitisation feasible for the majority of collections, which often contain thousands of items in a range of formats in varying condition,⁸ and if we cannot digitise everything how do we make choices?

SURROGATE DELIVERY: THE POWER OF THE IMAGE

The JRUL digital-image collection is delivered over the web-site through the Luna Insight software system. The system allows readers to search on a wide range of parameters and then create their own collections, examine them in a virtual lightbox where more than one image can be compared and create and share learning materials.

Collections of other institutions who also mount their collections within Luna can also be searched and thus the system provides potential for collaboration between repositories and, in particular, the sharing of research information.

Collaboration has been a particularly strong theme in the development of a project to catalogue the Rylands Genizah collection, which contains around 11,000 fragments of documents originally stored in the loft of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Old Cairo. This was used from the ninth to the nineteenth century for discarded books and manuscripts of all types. The collection therefore includes texts covering both secular and religious subjects. The papers tell many human stories going back to biblical times. There are a number of Genizah collections in libraries all over the world. The most substantial is held by Cambridge University Library, which holds about 140,000 items.⁹

The Rylands Genizah fragments are in a range of formats, including individual leaves from printed books and manuscripts, archival material such as letters, official documents and even children's exercise books. Several languages are represented, including Hebrew, Arabic and Judeo-Arabic. A grant of £360,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council in 2006 enabled us to set up a project under the leadership of Professor Philip Alexander of the University of Manchester's religions and theology group, to digitise and catalogue the collection.¹⁰ We are well on the way to producing images of all the fragments, with

metadata associated directly with each image. Assistant librarian Carol Burrows worked with research associate Renate Smithuis to devise a metadata profile compliant with all major standards for images.

Our aim was to establish a web presence for the collection as quickly as possible and then to add to the collection as soon as basic metadata was available. The collection is identified as a distinct image collection within the library's Luna software.



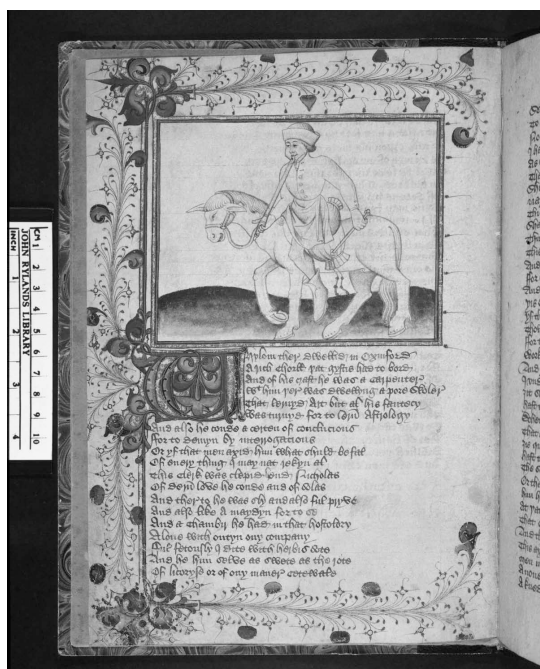
Two fragments from a manuscript by Moses Maimonides (1135 - 1240) which have been reunited within the collection held at the Rylands. Genizah A281 and B5756.

Within the collection we knew there was an important group of manuscripts associated with Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), physician to Saladin and perhaps the most important of Jewish philosophers. An image of a fragment of his famous *Guide of the perplexed* in his own hand was added to the image collection. Shortly after, Ben Outhwaite, head of the Cambridge Genizah unit, recognised the section as the other half of a fragment within his own collection. As a result two scraps of paper separated for at least a century, and themselves more than 800 years old, have been virtually re-united and researchers can now see the complete page, even though the sections are separated by hundreds of miles. We hope to go on identifying 'joins' and thus to re-construct the contents of the synagogue storeroom, demonstrating how collaborative digitisation adds value to the individual efforts of Genizah repositories.

There are of course many other examples where collections or even single books have been separated over time. The digital environment offers important opportunities for libraries to bring this material together, re-construct wholes from parts and make resources both visible and convenient

for researchers to use. We hope our current JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)-funded digitisation project focussing on Middle English manuscripts will result in the two-folio fragment of *The Canterbury tales* (Rylands MS 63) being reunited with the eleven-folio fragment held by the Rosenbach library in Philadelphia.

Although a comprehensive approach to digitisation might be ideal, in practice many archive collections are of such a size that such a policy has so far not been adopted. We have, however, tried to identify material that lends itself to attractive images that might act as 'tasters', attracting readers to use the originals. In all externally funded cataloguing projects we now include varying elements of digitisation. Within the Rylands image collection, therefore, we have several hundred relating to medical themes arising from our Wellcome Trust-funded project mentioned earlier. You can find images of surgical operations alongside trade magazines advertising X-ray equipment. There are also images arising from our collections associated with the novelist George Gissing (1857–1903) and the illustrator and designer Walter Crane (1845–1915).



Tinted drawing of the Miller from Chaucer's *'Canterbury Tales'*, English MS 63

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS BORN DIGITAL

Traditionally we have collected modern books, for example in the field of modern literature, where we have associated archival collections. The books and the personal papers together create a complete collection and provide a 'one-stop shop' for researchers. But what of the future? E-books have

yet to catch the mass market but surely it is only a matter of time? Sales of the Sony e-book will certainly be an interesting indicator. The history of music sales in recent years would indicate that if the right delivery gadget is found, with effective software, then take-up will take off. Although special collections librarians will continue to collect printed (or, strictly speaking, published) content to ensure context for archival collections, as e-books gain ground the relationship between special collections staff and IT colleagues will become more central to collection management. While this seems a fairly obvious statement, there are nevertheless some organisational and technical issues to face.



X-ray of a hand taken by the physicist Arthur Schuster (1851 - 1934) in the late 1890s.

Papers of Ian Isherwood.

Archives present a different challenge that those who curate and actively collect personal papers must address, and address urgently. We have been fortunate to have been working since 2005 with the Bodleian library (as lead partner) in a JISC-funded research project, 'Paradigm', which has explored the issues associated with collecting the personal papers of living politicians. A major outcome has been a workbook, authored by the project team (led by Susan Thomas of the Bodleian Library but involving also Renhart Gittens, Oxford software engineer, and Janette Martin and Fran Baker, digital archivists at Manchester).¹¹ Their work has revealed the importance of the open archival information system (OAIS) model as a workflow for digital archives. The project also demonstrated very clearly the importance of working closely with the owner or producer of an archive to ensure material of historical significance is not lost or, conversely, buried electronically. Out of Paradigm came CAIRO (Complex Archive Ingest for Repository Objects), also a collaborative project, including this time the Wellcome Library as well as Oxford and Manchester. The aim of this project was to produce an ingest tool from open-source software and it is hoped that this software will be available shortly.

CONCLUSIONS

If we want to increase the use and research impact of special collections then we need to exploit better the power of the web. If special collections librarians fail to address this issue, much of the material within repositories will become or remain invisible. We need to explore ways in which we can use the digital environment to innovate in resource discovery for both print and archive collections, to break down the traditional boundaries between formats. Researchers want the highest number of 'hits' for the fewest number of searches. We need to encourage collaborative projects that 'join up' collections and themes, working not only with other repositories but also with academic colleagues, allowing them into the world of cataloguing and 'resource discovery'. Finally but perhaps most urgently, we must engage with issues around digital preservation to ensure that we do not lose the historical record relating to the people and institutions of these early decades of the twenty-first century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to my colleagues in special collections, Fran Baker, Carol Burrows, Anne-Marie Clarkson and Renate Smithuis, for assistance in the preparation of this article.

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Obtaining accessible alternative- format materials for print-impaired students:

latest developments from the Open
Rose Group

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ORG, dazed by the sun, meeting Sal Cooke at TechDis in York

The ability to provide an equal service to print-impaired students is a huge challenge to most academic libraries, not least because of the time and cost involved. For example, the contents of a book may need to be scanned and manipulated in order to convert it to a format that is accessible to screen-reading software. Much discussion involving staff and organisations involved in supporting visually impaired (VI) people (library staff, JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) TechDis, the RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People)) has been taking place on a national level to try to persuade publishers to provide their

material in an accessible format. One positive result has been the joint JISC TechDis/Publishers Association 2008 publication *Guide to obtaining textbooks in alternative formats*, to which one member of the Open Rose Group (ORG), Paul Conway, contributed his 'invaluable assistance' based on personal experience.

The differing experiences of five of the eight member institutions of the ORG are described below. The ORG has pulled together these differing needs and drawn up a generic mind-map of the processes involved in requesting alternative formats from publishers, which was circulated and discussed at this year's conference of librarians in higher education working to improve library access for disabled users in the south and south-west of England (CLAUD). The ORG has also devised a letter that all members can send to publishers when requests arise.

1. SUPPORTING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AT LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, BY ALY PEACOCK

We recently had to request numerous items (29 core texts and 15 recommendations for background reading) for an international student who was only with us for six months on placement. We worked closely with her college in America. If her college library there stocked the titles she needed, they would be emailed to me, sometimes within twenty-four hours, which was incredible! If the titles were not in stock, the student had to buy the books and ship them over to her home institution, where they were scanned and emailed back to us. We approached UK publishers for many of the titles and, although they were helpful up to a point, most could not provide an electronic copy and only granted us permission to scan.

This is not an ideal outcome, because the process involves many issues and practicalities:

Who approaches the publisher for an electronic format?

- Who monitors progress of requests?
- Who does the scanning?
- Who formats the files?
- Who pays for this?
- What timescales are involved?

All these issues were further complicated by the fact the student was not eligible for a disabled student's allowance (DSA).

VI students need inclusive services: having books in a format that is already accessible means that they, and we as library staff, do not have to over-

come obstacles in order to acquire their electronic texts. If students have to engage with the administrative issues associated with this process – such as keeping track of what we have been able to obtain electronically, what needs to be scanned in-house, which items must be outsourced and so on – rather than on their coursework, they are not on a level playing field with their peers who do not have to jump through hoops to obtain course materials they can access. A blind student, for example, would need to use a package that screen-reads. If we have to scan the contents of the book individually to make an accessible electronic copy, that's incredibly time-consuming. There must be a better way of doing this and sharing our scanned files. That is where the JISC TechDis resources come in. We feel that Publisher Lookup UK (www.publisherlookup.org.uk) and the *Guide to obtaining textbooks in alternative formats* answer specific and important needs faced by students and staff.

Using the ORG's work as a starting point, our library is working with the copyright officer and digitisation project team, disability services and library managers to mainstream our approach to this issue across the university and to draw up a policy that we can all work with. This will also enable us to have a clear idea where all our responsibilities lie.

2. SUPPORTING VI UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, BY PAUL CONWAY

At Sheffield Hallam University, since December 2005, as a pilot scheme I have been supporting a blind undergraduate criminology student throughout her course in obtaining and accessing alternative formats of key texts. Information adviser Jo Dobson has been similarly supporting a visually impaired undergraduate sports student since September 2007. Our experiences have been very different. I have, on the whole, obtained PDF versions of books from publishers reasonably quickly, though the response rates have varied from a six-minute (!) email response with PDF file attached, from Sage Publications, to several weeks: the average response time has been about a week and a half. This success has no doubt been due to the fact that many key titles on the criminology reading lists are recent and they are published by major publishers.

On the other hand, Jo has had mixed results because many of the books on the reading lists of the student she has been supporting are older and were published by smaller firms, many of

them international. A recurring problem has been the incompatibility of the latest version of Adobe with the version of screen-reading software used by the student. This is an issue which has taken much time to resolve and is still the subject of ongoing tests. During the 2008/09 academic year, obtaining alternative textbooks for students will be opened up to all print-impaired students with a learning contract with the university whom student services tutors feel would benefit from this service.

3. SUPPORTING VI STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD, BY LOIS BURT

My first real introduction to the issue of publishers and accessible formats occurred several years ago when I was approached by a blind research assistant who instructed me to contact all the publishers and force them to provide all their material electronically. I was fortunate in that, because it was the vacation and a quiet time for them, the Leeds transcription service, of which the University of Sheffield is a member, agreed to send me a couple of previously digitised items free of charge. Normally its service is available only to students, not to staff, and, naturally, costs are incurred if the material is not already available.

My main recent experience has involved supporting a VI postgraduate research student. Whereas VI undergraduate students tend to need most help with obtaining core textbooks in an accessible format, our postgraduate has required more obscure research material. It was a rather desperate attempt to clarify all the options and factors to consider that led me to draft the first version of a flowchart (see www.techdis.ac.uk/getaltformat). Both Sage Publications and the publisher of a small magazine have been approached for digital copies of their material and, fortunately, free-of-charge co-operation has been excellent and very quick in both cases. For another request, involving a chapter from an older edition of a textbook, the decision had to be made as to who would provide it more quickly and cheaply – a good publisher like Sage or the Leeds transcription service? When the student realised it would not be available instantly, he settled for a photocopy which one of his medical helpers read out to him!

Strange as it may seem, no help has been required in obtaining accessible formats of material for a blind undergraduate student I have recently supported. The main difficulties that have arisen in her case were due to the fact that the subject databases were upgraded without adequate reference

to the implications for users of JAWS (Job Access With Speech).

4. PROVIDING READINGS IN ALTERNATIVE FORMATS AND THE WORK OF THE DIGITISATION TEAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD, BY CHRIS BEEVERS

At the University of Huddersfield the post of library disability support officer (DSO) and the section responsible for digitising course readings under the terms of the Copyright Licensing Agency licence both come under the user services team. Working closely together has highlighted the overlap between the work to digitise readings and to make them available to everyone on a particular course and efforts by the DSO to provide references in accessible formats for individual VI or dyslexic students. This might seem like stating the obvious but, as can happen in any institution, if activities are undertaken independently in different departments, any similarities and potential for synergistic working can be overlooked. This was evident when members of the ORG sat around a table to develop the mind-map already referred to. As part of their work to digitise course readings, members of staff in the user services team are responsible for:

- obtaining reading lists via our library subject teams
- liaising with academics about scanning requirements
- scanning material within the terms of the CLA licence
- applying to publishers for permission to scan material that falls outside the terms of the licence
- managing the above processes and keeping accurate records.

These activities lend themselves very well to also providing readings in accessible formats. Members of the team are already used to contacting the permissions departments of publishers when material is not covered by the licence, and can easily adopt the ORG letter (see below) to request readings in accessible formats. In instances where publishers are unable or unwilling to supply material in appropriate formats, the team can scan material in-house. Text-readable PDFs which have undergone the optical character-recognition process are produced as standard.

Scanning can be both time-consuming and costly in terms of staffing resources, and publishers should always be approached to supply accessible copies of their own material as a first recourse.

However, when this is not possible, having material scanned by an already experienced team is surely the most cost-effective option.

5. SUPPORTING PRINT-IMPAIRED STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS AND THE RNIB TRANSCRIPTION CENTRE. BY AUDREY COBB

I have faced many of the same issues as my ORG colleagues in obtaining core texts for undergraduates and research materials for postgraduates and in supporting international students who do not have access to a DSA. Resourcing provision of alternative format in terms of time is increasingly difficult. Students frequently request items they need urgently but publishers can be slow to react. Using both Publisher Lookup UK and the ORG letter template has made a significant difference to response times and seems to have improved publisher understanding. However, problems in response times, occasionally of receiving no response at all, and difficulties in obtaining alternative formats for print impairments other than VI remain. This is especially true of those publishers who are not involved with Publisher Lookup UK.

We are fortunate here at Leeds to have the RNIB transcription centre on campus: consequently I do not scan items. The transcription centre does amazing work transcribing materials held by the library quickly and efficiently into any format required. They also obtain alternative-format material direct from publishers and have experienced many of the same problems the ORG has noted: lack of response from some publishers, lengthy delays in responses, restrictions on PDFs that make them difficult to use with screen-readers, difficulties with obtaining older material (in some cases pre-2003 items are not available in archives) and charges for alternative-format versions. We have had one exploratory meeting where we swapped experiences but more work needs to be done so that we can provide students with a clear, co-ordinated, effective and efficient service.

Many questions need addressing, including:

- How do students know who to ask?
- How do we know in a timely fashion what is required?
- What is the role of the library, of disability services and of the transcription centre in providing alternative formats for a range of print impairments?
- What is the publishers' reaction to the role of the transcription centre and Revealweb?

6. CONCLUSION

ORG members have agreed to write up their experiences of obtaining materials in alternative formats from publishers for students and to share them with the rest of the group. This information should form a very useful knowledge base, which will help to quickly identify issues, trends, anomalies and good practice in the process as an increasing number of VI and other print-impaired students from our institutions begin to request materials in a broad range of subjects.

The mind-map (Inspiration 8 and Word format) and letter are available on request via openrose@email.com. Alternatively, go to www.techdis.ac.uk/getaltformat. We'd really like your feedback on these and are hoping that other institutions will adopt this approach, the theory being if we all ask the same questions and push in the same directions, along with the backing of more influential organisations like JISC TechDis and the RNIB, we may gradually persuade all publishers to make their material accessible to all.

FURTHER READING

Copyright Licensing Agency Limited, *Photocopying and scanning HE licence* [online], available from: http://www.cla.co.uk/assets/357/he_uuk_photo_scanning.pdf [accessed 6 October 2008]

Great Britain. Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, Chapter 48. London: HMSO, 1988

Great Britain. Copyright (Visually Impaired Persons) Act 2002, Chapter 33. London: HMSO, 2002

JISC TechDis and The Publishers Association, *Guide to obtaining textbooks in alternative formats*. York: JISC TechDis, 2008

Useful links

www.techdis.ac.uk/getaltformat

www.publisherlookup.org.uk

Make the numbers count: improving students' learning experiences



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At the University of the Arts London (UAL) we have become increasingly aware that while feedback on Library and Learning Resources (LLR) and its services is received from a very extensive range of sources, it still remains difficult to extract meaningful data from these records. It is particularly challenging to extract detailed and relevant information about the individual learning experience of our diverse students, in their interactions with our services and our staff.

Gathering data for a recent internal service review, we felt that there was still a lot which was not understood or was not being asked of our students about their experience of using UAL libraries. We also felt that this feedback would prove extremely helpful for future decision-making about service design and delivery. We particularly wanted to learn more about issues of access and support for students studying at UAL who are

from groups which are currently under-represented in higher education.

TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP

The award of a University Teaching and Professional Fellowship provided us with an opportunity to look beyond usage figures, gate counts and percentage satisfaction levels, to extend and add to our knowledge-base of what students at UAL really think and feel about academic libraries.

The title of our project reflected our aspiration for the Fellowship, which was to enable the project team, as LLR staff, to hear the student voice and to get to know and learn about real people and not just look at the numbers!

Make the numbers count allowed us to gather new qualitative data through semi-structured student interviews. We then compared this information to our existing sources of feedback to establish if the themes and issues which arose challenged or correlated with what we already knew about use and non-use of LLR at UAL.

The main focus of the project was to explore the particular experience of students who are the first in their family to go to university and who are currently studying at four of our six colleges. Research has shown that 'first generation' students make up a large and significant proportion of students who are now entering higher education through the expansion of participation in university and tertiary-level study.¹

Talking to first generation students was a key element of the Fellowship and the greatest source of learning for the project team.

The research took place over three academic terms in 2007-2008 and included a literature review to underpin and inform our project findings as well as a survey of current activity relating to widening participation developments at other university libraries. The project team comprised Jan Conway *Assistant Director (Academic Services)*, Tania Olsson *Assistant Learning Resources Manager (Chelsea)* and Nick Veale *Assistant Information Services Librarian (London College of Communication)*.

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

UAL plays an important national leadership role in promoting widening participation in arts higher education. It was a driving force behind the creation of the National Arts Learning Network (NALN).

NALN is a Lifelong Learning Network involving specialist arts colleges in England and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and it has proved significant in the development of practice and academic research in respect of widening participation in arts higher education. In addition, UAL is the higher education partner with the Sorrell Foundation in the development and delivery of the *Young Design Programme*. Six institutions now deliver this programme across England.

These and other activities underpin the university's vision to be 'the leading institution in promoting widening participation in arts higher education.' The UAL widening participation strategy 2009-2011 responds to recent statements on widening participation made by both HEFCE and the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS).² Widening participation and fair access remains one of HEFCE's four core aims as detailed in HEFCE's Strategic Plan 2006-2011 (updated May 2008)³ One of these key objectives is 'to embed widening participation in the corporate policy and practice of Higher Education Institutions'.

The UAL widening participation strategy seeks to ensure that widening participation initiatives focus not only on 'outreach' and recruitment, but also on the progression, retention and achievement of UAL students.

This national and university context provided the background and foundation for our research.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The fundamental aim of the Fellowship was to increase our understanding of first generation students and their learning journey at UAL. We wanted to identify any challenges or barriers to access and services experienced by this student group, in order to establish how the library and its staff might need to change to remove these obstacles to learning. The emphasis of the project would be to gain an understanding of how we, as staff, and our services might change, not the students. We also believed that by making things better for 'widening participation' students we would improve services for everyone.

First generation students are a very diverse group, comprising full-time, part-time, mature, young, home, European Union and international students. As a group, they are also important in terms of

current research into issues of access, retention and success in higher education.⁴

We know that all new students can find themselves in unfamiliar territory as they transition to higher education, but first generation students may experience more extreme 'academic shock' because they have no one in their family who has gone to university before them to help them to understand all the unwritten and unspoken ground-rules of academia. Parental influence, education and cultural experience have a significant effect on student transition to tertiary level education⁵ and also on student integration into the wider university environment, particularly in relation to the transmission of tacit knowledge through the family.⁶ We were interested to see how these issues might relate to students' experiences and use of the UAL libraries.

METHODOLOGY

The project team undertook a series of semi-structured student interviews and noted staff 'conversations' to probe and clarify individual experiences of using the UAL libraries. A total of twelve recorded staff interviews, seven noted staff conversations and eleven student interviews took place. The aim was to stimulate reflection, explore recurring themes and to learn about student use of current services, about their perceptions of libraries and librarians and to debate some potential pilot service enhancements.

One of the first things that we needed to learn in order to start the interviews, was how to obtain ethics clearance for pedagogical research. This was new territory for the project team but a very worthwhile experience in terms of building foundations of best practice for future research in the department.

We also took the opportunity to think more critically about student feedback, its real purpose and use, and how we might choose to ensure an ongoing dialogue with staff and students in the future. This reflection is now informing on-going debates at library and university level on future planning for gathering student feedback.

FIRST GENERATION STUDENT EXPERIENCES

The students we talked to were very open in their discussions with us. They frequently offered and shared solutions with the interviewers, seeking to resolve the difficulties that they described. They provided positive affirmation of the strengths of

LLR and its staff as well as candid criticism of some areas of the service and operation. We were struck by their willingness to share their experiences in the anticipation that the information we gathered during the Fellowship would be used to 'make things better' and improve the student experience of all UAL students in the future.

We asked students about their prior experience of libraries, before coming to UAL. We talked to them about their introduction to LLR and their first impressions of the libraries they used. We asked them which services and collections proved most useful to them, how they found out about these, and what they felt was good and bad about LLR. We discussed whether they thought that LLR and its services had any impact on their success on their course, and asked for their views on potential pilot services.

The conversations ranged far and wide and a broad range of topics emerged. Several issues recurred during these conversations. These key themes included:

- the crucial importance of orientation pre-entry and induction at the commencement of courses;
- the significance of tutors as the pivotal point of referral to the library and to reading for the course;
- the impact that assumptions of 'tacit knowledge' or the lack of it can have in terms of creating a barrier to academic library use;
- the need for 'comfort' in relation to space to work and study and the importance of the learning environment to students;
- varied expectations and perceptions about books and reading and what constitutes independent learning;
- diverse perceptions and expectations of libraries and librarians;
- a lack of awareness of online information and e-resources;
- some frustration with technology and access to IT particularly at stress points on the course;
- confusion about the use of jargon and signage in UAL libraries;
- the specific needs of students with disabilities and, in particular, dyslexic students.

We also established that there were a startling number of important 'facts' about LLR provision which the students did not know at all, which immediately began to raise questions about the effectiveness of current induction arrangements,

the accessibility of staff and about communication methods between LLR and its users.

We then examined these findings by exploring them further in conversation with a range of LLR and other UAL staff and talked about the effective use of our libraries and the skills of our library staff. We also looked at these issues as described and analysed in the literature of these subjects,⁷ and gathered information from other university libraries about how they supported students from groups which are currently under-represented in higher education. We produced a final report for the project in July 2008.

A one page summary of the findings and key recommendations was produced to circulate to staff and students to inform them of the key issues identified and to describe what action LLR would now take as a result of this research.

STUDENT VOICES

The students we talked to during this study were all first generation entrants to higher education. This provided a very helpful and relevant 'lens' and focus for the project. Looking back and reflecting upon what we found however, we believe that the issues that these students raised and the learning styles and preferences they described would also have emerged from other groups of students.

This feeling was validated by other research projects which involved listening to students, carried out at the university over the last year. These projects identified similar messages and key themes to the ones we established through the Fellowship research, such as the impact of induction overload, a call for an incremental approach to knowledge acquisition and skills development and the need to de-mystify the language of higher education.

CONCLUSION

Make the numbers count achieved a number of outcomes we believe will be beneficial for LLR at UAL. Our research enabled us to establish a number of recommendations for action which are achievable and will improve services. We also identified two potential pilot services to research and trial in more depth over the next academic year. The first pilot will be to institute and test-out SMS (Short Message Service) text messaging. The second entails the development of new guidelines and procedures for the extension of one-to-one

subject librarian and student information resource and skills sessions, across the department.

We learned a lot about assumptions made by staff and by students about libraries and library services. This learning will be fed into forthcoming staff development programmes and will also be used to inform the future redevelopment of information skills programmes.

The Fellowship also provided the chance to build and develop new and existing relationships with academic colleagues, as well as widening participation, study support and student services staff.

We want to continue to strive to know our library users well. It is this knowledge of the reality of studying in higher education today, and a current understanding of the demands being made of students in their daily lives, that will shape and define a truly relevant and effective service.

As a service, LLR values creativity and difference and our vision is "to be at the heart of learning and discovery in the Arts." To achieve this we will need to challenge assumptions, both our own and others. We need to continue to gather evidence which helps to break down stereotypes of students and of libraries and librarians. Through listening to student voices, this project enabled us to enhance our understanding of the identity and requirements of the diverse communities which are part of UAL. We know that this will improve our ability to support all our students to become successful and fully independent learners. As one student we interviewed put it:

'... [I]n the library I feel that they will help direct you here and there and then you will grow not to need them.'

The authors would be very happy to answer any questions about this project and the outcomes of our research.

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Using survey and usage statistics to improve libraries

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USELESS AND USEFUL STATISTICS

Higher education is awash with statistics; so are university libraries. Some of those statistics are meaningful, providing a decent basis for planning service improvements; others are not. This article is mainly intended as a help to distinguishing between the two. I'm not working to any particularly demanding criterion of usefulness or helpfulness here: in my book, statistics can be useful for library development if they are probably more true than not and help us to exercise judgement in planning or in the allocation of funding.

Perhaps it would be helpful to give an example of a statistic that is useless as a basis for planning service improvements, or at any rate not awfully useful. Suppose you do a survey, in your own university only, which shows that 70% of your users are either satisfied or very satisfied with the library services. At first sight that might appear to be a useful insight, but in reality it probably means virtually nothing other than that your library is not yet bad enough to require UN intervention and that the library staff need not tender their resignation en masse. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, although the score *looks* pretty good, because the survey has only been done in your institution there is no real way of knowing whether 70% is laudable or culpable. It could be that if the same survey were to be performed in ten other universities the average score would be 90%, making you a pariah, or 50%, making you a paragon. There are a number of other reasons why your 70% figure probably isn't all that helpful or revealing: it doesn't show what aspects of your library are good or bad; it doesn't show what students think is important; and it may be that the number of students surveyed is so small that the conclusions you try to derive from it are statistically unwarrantable. Section 3,

below, on 'things that make statistics more useful', tries to shed light on some of these issues.

USELESS STATISTICS CAN SOMETIMES BE POLITICALLY USEFUL, THOUGH

Before we plunge into the statistical nitty-gritty I should make a small confession: I have nothing against useless statistics. Sadly, in our fallen world, there are occasions when one has to use them, and I have made abundant use of them myself. A distinction has to be made between using statistics as a basis for library planning and development – what this article is mainly about – and using them politically. Again, let me give an example. Suppose you are Chief Librarian and have acquired a new boss in a management restructuring. Your boss, in the first fine careless rapture of office, has decided that he will interview groups of students to find out what they think about the university. He chooses history students and part-time nursing students as his representative cohorts. They both tell him how awful the library is. He is seriously perturbed. He hauls you in and asks you to account for this sad state of affairs. He gives you fair warning that he may not be able to support your bid for additional resources for the library because his interviews show that it would be throwing good money after bad. What should you do? Warn him that his interview groups were too small to generalise from? Point out that he selected two groups that are always likely to have a more severe view of the library than, say, engineers or scientists? No, because all that, though completely true, would sound too self-justifying and you would not gain your point. What you should do, of course, is to generate just the kind of semi-useless statistics that I described at the beginning of this article. He has played the imaginary king; you have to trump it with the illusory ace. So get going with your general survey, which will show that 70% of students (a thumping majority as you will tell him) are either satisfied or very satisfied with library provision. It will do nothing to help you improve the library, but it will solve your political dilemma.

THINGS THAT MAKE STATISTICS MORE USEFUL FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Comparability between libraries

My main grouse with the survey I described above – discovering that 70% of students were either satisfied or very satisfied with library provision – was that there was no way of knowing whether 70% was a good or a bad score. If the same survey were to be carried out in a number of

other similar libraries it would make the statistics more meaningful (subject to the tests of statistical significance described below) because you would be able to find out whether your 70% was comparatively good or comparatively bad. This is one of the benefits of the LibQual methodology, used by many UK and hundreds of US libraries, which allows you to compare your LibQual survey results with those of other groups of libraries. Caution does need to be exercised here: the results are probably going to be a bit more useful if the libraries you are comparing yourself with are institutions with a broadly similar mission.¹

One might also argue, of course, that comparing the library with other service departments in the same university would provide useful comparative data. Suppose, for example, your university surveys its academic staff to monitor their satisfaction with different university central services, and the result shows that the library is a more highly regarded service than personnel, estates or finance. Isn't that a useful validation of the quality of your service? Well, theoretically yes, but my suspicion is that the library will tend to be viewed with an intrinsic benevolence and personnel will tend to be judged harshly at *all* universities.² You would really need comparative data with other institutions to derive firm conclusions. For example if the library was massively more popular than personnel at ten similar universities but only slightly more popular than personnel at your institution, then, despite the apparent positivity of the statistic, it would tend to indicate that you had some work to do.

Comparability over time

Statistics obviously become more useful if they can be compared over time, because they give some sense of whether your service is improving or declining. It is important to determine, though, whether changes that take place are statistically significant (see 'Statistical significance', below). It is also important to ensure that circumstances have not changed in a way that means your comparison has become invalid. A good example of this is provided by the SCONUL statistics figures for book issues. These figures include renewals, which, with the advent of OPACs (Online Public Access Catalogues), have become very easy for a user to effect. This means that the issue figures have been hugely bolstered by the explosion of 'touch of a button' online renewals. At Liverpool these now account for nearly 40% of total issues, as against just over 10% in 2000/2001. This means that the apparent buoyancy of issue figures in SCONUL institutions – up from 51 issues per FTE

(Full Time Equivalent) student in 2000/01 to 56 in 2005/6 – is largely illusory. We will go seriously wrong if we use these figures uncritically as the basis of workload planning and service development.

Asking respondents what they think is important

Asking respondents what they think is important is always useful and it's vital if you're using your statistics as a way of deciding on the allocation of resources. Suppose, for example, you have some extra funding that you could put into either extra opening hours or an additional enquiry desk. Your statistics show that satisfaction with opening hours is slightly on the low side, but satisfaction with enquiry support is even lower. If you used this information alone as the basis of your funding decision you would put your money into improving enquiry support. Suppose, however, that you also asked students how important these two factors were to them and discovered that generous opening hours were a lot more important to them than enquiry support. The high importance rating given to opening hours would probably persuade you that you would make the biggest impact on overall student satisfaction by opening the library for longer.

Just as it is useful for libraries to know what their users think is important, so that they can use their resources to best effect, it's useful for universities to know this, for the same reason. So if your university does undertake a satisfaction survey it's worth ensuring, if you can, that importance ratings are included. There is an impeccably altruistic reason for doing this – as a good citizen of your university you would want to ensure that it uses its resources sensibly – but it is also very much in the library's interests. Academic staff and senior managers invariably underestimate the importance of libraries to students. Surveys of what students feel is important are a useful way of countering this, because they invariably show that libraries are more important to students than anything other than the absolutely core academic issues of course content and teaching quality.

Statistical significance

This is an area that was as deeply offputting to me initially, as it will be to the majority of you reading this article. The bad news is that if you really intend to act upon the statistics you gather you do need to know whether they are meaningful enough to form a solid foundation for action. The good news is that, though it sounds nerdily mathematical, statistical significance is largely an embodiment of common sense and there are easy

guides for the mathematically challenged. There are also plenty of people in a university who do understand statistics, so it's reasonably easy to get help if you're out of your depth.

What does testing for statistical significance mean? Let's return to our initial example – the survey in which 70% of the students you surveyed thought that your library was either good or very good. Supposing you repeated the survey a year later and found that, after you had made some improvements to services, the figure was 71%. Could you safely conclude, therefore, that student satisfaction with the library service had improved? To put it another way, could you generalise from the (necessarily limited number of) users who responded to your survey to the whole body of users? You are never going to know for absolutely certain, of course, but what significance testing allows you to do is make a statement like 'It's 95% certain that there has been an improvement' – in other words that the apparent improvement was probably real, not just statistical 'noise'. Without going into the maths of it, the sort of thing that significance levels are influenced by include:

- *the size of the sample:*

Given that what we usually do with student surveys is try and infer things about the student body as a whole from the (typically) minority of students who respond to our survey, it makes sense that we can be more confident about a survey in which large numbers of students participated than one in which only a handful responded. One slightly counter-intuitive fact about samples sizes, though, is that the absolute number of respondents tends to be a more important influence on statistical significance than the proportion of the group that responds. That is why exit polls, asking people how they voted as they come out of the polling station, have proved to be an extremely reliable predictor of general election results, despite the fact that only a very small proportion of the electorate is surveyed.

- *The extent of the difference in scores:*

Again, this accords with common sense. If, in our hypothetical survey, the percentage of students who thought the library was good or very good increased from 70% to 90%, we would expect the rise to be more statistically significant than if it had increased from 70% to 71%. There is, by the way, a useful statistical technique for 'normalising' scores: removing the effect of using different scales for

survey responses (1 to 100 scores as against 1 to 5, for example).

Although all this can all seem aridly theoretical, it is, in reality, urgently practical. For instance, when we undertook our recent LibQual survey at Liverpool, significance testing showed that although we could make meaningful comparisons between the undergraduate responses for 2004 and 2006, the differences in the staff responses between the two years were, except in relation to a small minority of questions, not statistically significant enough for us to make inferences from (which was a pity since they showed an apparent improvement!). Subjecting your statistics to this kind of test also makes them more persuasive, particularly to those academic groups and senior university managers who are statistically savvy and who may initially assume that your statistics are on the fluffy side.

Combining the results of different surveys

No survey you organise, or are involved in, will meet all the criteria listed above. The National Student Survey, for example, offers good comparability between institutions but the fact that it asks only a single, rather badly worded question about libraries means that it offers no insight into what is good or bad about your library. I am a fan of the LibQual methodology, but the level of comparability it offers is limited and it doesn't ask anything about the importance to users of the different dimensions of the library service it investigates. By combining the results from a number of surveys each survey can be made to supplement the deficiencies of the others. Table 1 shows an extract from a table we compiled at Liverpool to create a richer statistical picture of our position by combining the results from the National Student Survey, the OpinionPanel survey, the LibQual survey and an internal Liverpool University survey of student perceptions. This also shows the way in which apparently firm conclusions from one survey can be called into question, or given a radically different perspective, by another that approaches the same issue from a different angle. Our internal University of Liverpool survey, for example, showed a worrying level of dissatisfaction with textbook provision, and might have led us to conclude that recent substantial increases in funding in this area had had no effect. But the LibQual survey showed us that contentment with textbook provision had improved between 2004 and 2006, and that the level of dissatisfaction with textbook provision was now lower than the average for other SCONUL libraries using the LibQual methodology.

Table 1 – Example of combining the results of different user surveys at the University of Liverpool

Statement	Authority
The Library at Liverpool is perceived by students to have improved since 2004.	NSS surveys from 2005, 2006 and 2007. LibQual Liverpool surveys for 2004 and 2006
Student satisfaction with library services is higher than with any other major dimension of student experience at Liverpool (other services, and aspects of course provision such as course content). 81% would recommend the Library to a friend, compared to an average recommendation rate for other aspects of university provision of 56%.	UoL Student Experience Survey 2007
Student satisfaction with our library, as reflected in the National Student Survey, has improved relative to the satisfaction of students at other civic universities with their libraries, though we are still behind four of the eight comparators.	NSS surveys from 2005, 2006 and 2007
BUT when the statement on which students are asked to comment emphasises 'opening hours', as the OpinionPanel survey does, we have among the top four satisfaction rates in the country	OpinionPanel survey 2007
The area of library operation that has improved most since 2004 is staff support (though access to subject specialist help is still fractionally below the minimum acceptable level)	LibQual Liverpool survey 2004 and 2006
The least improved area since 2004 is library buildings and environment, though the creation of the informal study area on the ground floor of the Harold Cohen Library appears to have improved the results a little between 2004 and 2006	LibQual Liverpool survey 2004 and 2006
AND the only areas where we are perceived to be below the average for libraries using the LibQual methodology relates to buildings and study environment	LibQual UK norms for 2006
The level of dissatisfaction with library stock has decreased substantially since 2004	LibQual Liverpool survey 2004 and 2006
AND satisfaction with library stock at Liverpool is higher than the average for the other UK university libraries using the LibQual methodology	LibQual UK norms for 2006
<p>BUT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of 'the main texts and and readings I need for my work' is still, even at the improved 2006 level, considered by students to be below the minimum acceptable level (though when the statement to which students respond is phrased as 'the printed materials I need for my work' students place provision just above the minimum acceptable level) • 27% of students are either 'not satisfied' or 'not at all satisfied' with the Library's provision of the books they need for their course • The free text responses to the National Student Survey reflect strong discontent with textbook provision 	<p>LibQual Liverpool survey 2006</p> <p>UoL Student Experience Survey 2007</p> <p>National Student Survey 2007 – free text comments</p>

Between opening hours, staff support and stock provision the highest level of satisfaction is with opening hours and the lowest is with stock provision	UoL Student Experience Survey 2007
AND levels of satisfaction with book provision are much lower than with journals or electronic information provision	UoL Student Experience Survey 2007 LibQual Liverpool survey 2006
Students regard the Library as more important than any other dimension of their university experience apart from core course attributes such as course content and organisation. 91% of students regarded the Library as important or very important. The equivalent average score for other aspects of university provision was 56%	UoL Student Experience Survey 2007

Table 1 also provides an illustration of another issue that should be borne in mind when using survey results to make planning decisions: that small changes in the wording of a question can make an enormous difference to users' responses. There were two surveys in the period covered in the chart that essentially aimed to elicit how good the students thought the University of Liverpool library was. In one, the National Student Survey, we were somewhere about the middle of the field. In the other, the Opinion Panel survey, we were third in the Russell Group, with only Oxford and Cambridge above us. The clue to the apparent paradox lies in the wording of the questions asked. In the NSS students were asked to respond to the statement that 'The library resources and services are good enough for any needs', while the statement to which students were asked to give their response in the Opinion Panel survey was 'Good library and library opening hours'. The clue to our superior performance in the latter survey was probably the fact that we had recently introduced 24-hour opening – a fact that would have been brought to the forefront of people's minds by the specific reference to opening hours in the Opinion Panel survey.

Asking respondents what they think is an acceptable level of service

Most of the satisfaction surveys that libraries conduct simply ask respondents how good they think our services are. LibQual asks them, in addition to this, what the minimum acceptable level of service is and what the desired level of service is. This is a powerful technique that can fundamentally alter one's interpretation of satisfaction data. Let me give an example. In our LibQual surveys for 2004 and 2006, at Liverpool the biggest single improvement came when undergraduates were asked how satisfied they were with 'the main texts and readings for my work'. This might have prompted us to turn our attention to other areas

where the level of satisfaction had increased less or had stalled. BUT, because we had asked students to define the minimum acceptable level for this factor we knew that even the dramatically improved level of provision was still below the minimum acceptable level. Similarly, the LibQual results showed that postgraduates perceived the library service in 2006 to be better than in 2004. *However*, it also showed that their perception of what was an acceptable minimum level of service had become more demanding, so that the extent to which they perceived the library to be better than the minimum acceptable standard had, in fact, declined. So we knew we still had work to do on postgraduate satisfaction.

Using statistics at the right level of detail

Probably the biggest obstacle we face to making use of much of the survey data we collect to help us improve services is simply that it is too general. Even if you know that, for example, your library's score in the National Student Survey is poor relative to other similar universities, you cannot do much about the problems it indicates without more detailed data.

I have no solution to this problem, but there are perhaps some things we could do collectively to help ourselves. One might be to pool our efforts in the analysis of big datasets to extract the data we need, or for SCONUL and/or RLUK (Research Libraries UK) to sub-contract the work on our behalf. One obvious target for this might be the National Student Survey statistics. I said above that the general score for your library in the NSS is of little help to you in improving services. There is, however, a wealth of data at subject level that might usefully inform your strategic planning by revealing areas of particular weakness. The reason few of us make use of it is that it is so difficult and laborious to extract the relevant data from the datasets available to us.

Straying a little from survey data we could also, collectively, bring pressure on LMS (Library Management System) and other software suppliers to provide better – or more readily accessible and intelligible – management information. Consider how amazing it is that, in a typical library survey, we ask people how often they visit the library. It's amazing because that data is already there, 100% accurate, in our systems. It's a bit like a bank basing its accounting on asking its customers how much money they think they have in their savings accounts. We don't extract the data because it's simply too fiddly and cumbersome to do so.

Even very general surveys will, if they contain a section for free text comments, of course yield data that is sufficiently detailed to be of use for planning purposes. Again, the National Student Survey is a case in point. The free text comments for your university are made available to it, so ask to see them if you haven't received them.

IS IT WORTH PUTTING THE EFFORT INTO ANALYSING SURVEY STATISTICS?

I can sympathise with a degree of cynicism about survey statistics. I think this is partly engendered by the way we and our universities manipulate them for competitive advantage. Competition between our universities has, in some ways been a great galvanising force but, as we all know, the first casualty of markets is truth. Our universities are quite as shameless about flaunting statistics that show them in a good light as they are ruthless at suppressing those that show them in a bad one.

Even those who are after truth, rather than competitive advantage, can be discouraged. It can take a lot of work, and a number of overlapping surveys before you get anywhere near 'the truth'. And often that truth is quite banal: because we are a reasonably empathic band we already have a pretty good idea of what our users like and don't like, and of the ways in which our services fall short of the ideal.

However, there really are good reasons to persevere and these are likely to grow more salient as the years pass. One reason is that competition between universities to recruit, and to recruit the best students, will grow and become more global. In such circumstances it becomes commensurately more important that we have an accurate picture of what distresses and what delights our students. That is why private-sector firms spend so much money on market research. But, more

fundamentally, knowledge of our users' needs and preferences should be seen as a core professional competence. We are all used to people talking nonsense about libraries, but we need to be able to refute the nonsense with convincing and rigorous data. That knowledge is also a powerful weapon in our dealings with our own universities. I have tried to avoid writing about the 'political' uses of survey statistics. But there really is nothing as good for your budget prospects as, for example, being able to show that investment in the library has led to improved student satisfaction.

NOTES

- 1 It's also worth noting – although it is outside the scope of this article – that if you are using the comparative statistics politically (say, to buttress a case for additional funding) they will be more persuasive if the comparison is with universities that are perceived by your university's senior managers to be similar. There is little political capital for me, at Liverpool University, for example, in putting forward a case based on the idea that our funding is inferior to that of Oxbridge or the Ivy League.
- 2 Having said that, I would find it difficult to resist making meretricious political capital out of such a finding!

'LIS – serious about research': focus groups with research staff at Swansea University



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In April 2007 the Research Information Network (RIN) and the Consortium of Research Libraries (CURL) published a report entitled *Researchers' use of academic libraries and their services: 'the results provide a snapshot of researchers' and librarians' attitudes and perceptions in relation to the UK's academic libraries. It is a timely snapshot since there are forces which appear set to accelerate the pace of change, both in the researchers' expectations and in libraries' ability to meet those expectations.'*¹

As a result of this report the subject librarian teams at Swansea University began to take steps to promote the services available to all staff at the university who are involved in research. To tie in with an earlier university marketing exercise, library and information services adopted the slogan 'Serious about research' to use in their promotional postcard 'LIS Serious about Research' to send out to all new members of staff. A poster promoting services to researchers was also designed and is displayed at postgraduate exhibition events as well as being used by subject librarians for drop-in sessions in schools and departments. We also created a dedicated research

portal from the LIS homepage. Although these actions taken by the subject teams were positive, one aspect that became apparent to us was the fact that we couldn't best serve the interests of our researchers or market the library and its services to them if we didn't know how they were working and what they wanted from us. What we really needed to do was ask them!

LIS runs its annual survey of customers for ten days during February each year.² This general satisfaction survey is completed by both staff and students and the results are used to help LIS prioritise further improvements to services. Since this survey gathers quantitative material to inform LIS development, it was felt that to consult directly with focus groups of research staff would be the best option, as this would gather some qualitative data. This would allow us to gauge research staff's current knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of the services and resources made available to them as well as views of how we might best develop those services and resources for the future to meet their research information needs.

The suggestion to run focus groups with the university research community was taken to the next subject services group meeting by the deputy subject librarians from the health team. The group agreed that this would be a very worthwhile project and volunteers were requested to form a working group to guide the project. The working group consisted of representatives from senior management, subject librarians and library assistants.

Conducting focus groups was something the members of the working group had very little experience of. At the first meeting, Chris Hall, e-learning support officer, was invited along to share his knowledge and experiences of running focus groups with the users of the university's e-learning platform, Blackboard. Chris highlighted the importance of obtaining a cross-section of researchers from the university community, to ensure representative results. He also talked about focus-group dynamics, ways to make participants feel relaxed and engaged and the neutral mediatory role of the facilitator, and he suggested offering incentives for attendance, such as hospitality. In addition to this, Katrina attended a focus-group workshop held in Cardiff in November 2007 that was organised by the visitor studies group, and she fed back many useful tips and directives from this course. We also tried to read widely from

the wide range of articles and other literature on conducting focus groups.

Over the next few months, and now armed with more knowledge than we had previously, we felt ourselves in a position to proceed and started to work out the practicalities of our focus groups. Initially we thought that we would run our first focus groups with postgraduates because we already had a good relationship with this group through our liaison with the postgraduate research office. The LIS postgraduate research programme runs during the first two terms of the academic year, offering information-skills sessions to postgraduates on a variety of tailored topics, such as effective database searching, finding conference papers and theses and many others. However, because we already had some knowledge of our postgraduate researchers we decided to run the first focus groups with research staff, primarily because this was uncharted territory; we had had little or no contact with this group and this was the opportunity to meet with them. We defined the aim of the focus group consultation to be:

'To ascertain the existing knowledge base of those staff involved in research of the support and services available from LIS and to collate their ideas and suggestions for possible future developments and opportunities to improve LIS provision.'

Deciding what we would ask our focus groups and how to structure those questions was the next challenge. LIS at Swansea University is a converged service, consisting of library, computing and careers. This gave us quite a large topic area to cover with our focus groups, but essentially we wanted to find out how the subject librarians could improve their role and support to research staff and this was what channelled our choice of topic area. We established six areas that we wanted to address and structured three or four questions for each area as a guide, to promote discussion. Structuring open questions that were not couched in library terms and that would invite response and interaction was quite challenging. The final topics were:

- Resources for research
- Space & environment
- Technology
- Librarians (specifically subject librarians)
- Website
- Training.

The focus groups were scheduled to be held at the end of June, to correspond with the end of term so that staff would be less busy and hopefully more inclined to attend. We decided to hold two focus groups on consecutive days, offering staff the opportunity to attend an afternoon or a morning event. To reach the broadest spread of staff involved in research on campus, the invitation to attend was sent out on the university's staff e-mail list. In response to this e-mail we had five bookings for the afternoon session and six for the morning consultation. In the event we had four attendees for the morning session and seven for the afternoon session from the schools of health science, human sciences, environment & society, physical sciences, arts, business & economics and the postgraduate research office. A confirmation e-mail was sent out the week before the consultations took place to those staff who had indicated they would attend. It verified the time and location and informed all participants that the sessions would be recorded but that any information gathered would be reported anonymously. The role of facilitator for both consultations was Steve Williams, deputy director of LIS, with two members of library staff also involved: one as scribe and the other as observer. The proceedings of each group were recorded by the scribe on a laptop, with the observer taking additional long-hand notes. Both groups were also recorded using a mini-disc-recording device borrowed from the university's media services department. Coffee and refreshments were provided for both groups and at the start of each consultation the participants were reminded that the session would be recorded in both note and audio formats.

RESULTS FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

Any initial concerns we had about whether we had the right questions prepared or if the discussion would flow and develop naturally quickly dissipated. The attendees of the focus groups were very forthcoming and informative with their responses. For the facilitator and note-takers it was frustrating at times to hear participants make incorrect statements about library services without being able to comment, but then gratifying to hear corrections from other attendees on our behalf. The following are some of the key areas discussed and comments that we received.

We asked 'What would you like the library to provide?' The most popular response to this question was a reminder that the traditional resources are still as important as ever to our researchers. Many of them wanted to see a regular monthly

update on what new books and journals had been received by the library. As so many researchers are working independently, they felt that a key role for the library is bringing researchers together in a 'hub of good practice' to 'advertise our good practice to other departments and wider, to help share things' and bring researchers together. Focus-group participants discussed the need for researchers from all subject areas to 'get together' more, due to the increase in interdisciplinary research at Swansea University. They suggested that LIS could provide seminars about LIS services/collections/facilities with the aim of bringing multidisciplinary researchers together. The discussion on improving communication channels between researchers and LIS also produced the suggestion of holding a 'once a month ... research party' to bring LIS staff and researchers from all subject areas together. LIS has since made use of the space in the postgraduate study area to display posters produced for various research projects, to allow a wider multidisciplinary audience access to these research results.

On the subject of electronic resource provision most participants were happy with what they were able to access via LIS subscription; '80% of the journals I need are available'; 'good access to runs of periodicals and electronic databases of various sorts'. When the discussion moved on to departmental library budgets, one researcher commented that 'purchasing for research slides down in favour of providing resources for undergraduate teaching. Budget cuts mean it is harder and harder to get requests through for special material.' Another added, 'Ordering books for teaching is fine; the route for ordering items for research is less obvious.' To ensure clarity on this procedure for researchers, more detailed information about the purchasing process is being included on the staff and research sections of the LIS web site.

'Voyager', the library catalogue, attracted some criticism; our researchers felt that its interface was outdated, the search options were unintuitive and overly complicated and in one case it was said to be only ever used as a last port of call. Another respondent stated that we needed to 'upgrade Voyager ... standardise it, make it like Google'. The outdated interface of Voyager was something that LIS was of course aware of, and a major upgrade was already scheduled for August 2008. The upgrade has now taken place and the new Voyager interface is much simpler and clearer, in line with many of the web-based search engines that users are familiar with. Although the upgrade did not occur as a direct result of the

research focus groups, it is a positive development that we can feed back to the attendees and to which we can invite their responses. The development of Voyager, along with all our resources, will of course continue in order that we can provide a competitive and effective service for our researchers. Andrew Brown, manager of the information systems team, is exploring 'interfaces which will search and deliver across a much wider range of resources and be tailored to different customer groups. The Voyager database will form part of this search as other databases do, but it will take its place in a wider resource search which will fulfil more of our customers' needs.'

Our researchers thought that LIS training needs to be tailored to their particular areas of interest in order to have a more direct impact and encourage attendance: 'If you link workshops to someone's research, people would be more inclined to come.' They also indicated that training sessions should be kept brief, maybe 45 minutes to an hour, and lunchtimes were suggested. LIS has coordinated with the university's staff development unit to hold several LIS-related sessions in their timetable of 'Lunch & Learn' opportunities, which last one hour maximum and include a sandwich lunch!

Due to personal preference, our researchers do not use the library as a space in which to work; they work from their own offices on campus or from home. The increasing availability of electronic resources has enabled researchers to carry out work in their own preferred environment, although researchers in the humanities acknowledged that archives and back-runs of print resources were still essential. Many commented on the fact that on the occasions they visit the library they find it noisy and crowded, and that improvement needs to be made to the signage around the building. Others felt that since there had been a café facility included in one area of the library the noise levels had increased; on the other hand one respondent liked that there was now a coffee area and said he brings his new research staff over to the library for coffee and discussion in that environment.

Gratifyingly, only three out of the total of eleven participants did not know about the support offered by subject librarians and teams. The service was indeed appreciated by those who use it, one researcher stating that 'The subject librarian is like a "phone a friend"' and 'staff and students really benefit from the services subject teams provide'. However, the fact that even a small number of participants did not know their subject

librarian indicates that LIS still needs to promote the subject teams to researchers. Other comments received from the focus groups highlighted the need to market LIS more effectively. As a result LIS has established a marketing group which, as part of its remit, will look at how best to promote the support available to researchers. Some subject teams are also taking the library directly to researchers by holding 'drop-in' sessions in the foyer of their department buildings to promote their services and answer any questions researchers may have.

It has been interesting to us to see that the findings from our focus groups often corresponded to the results published by RIN in *Researchers'*

use of academic libraries and their services (see note 1). The experience of running focus groups with our research staff has been invaluable to us and we hope to continue with this method as a tool for consultation with our various user groups. In practical terms, the information gathered from the focus groups has enabled us to develop an action plan based upon the comments we received. It has helped us to more fully understand the significance that the library has to our research staff and how we can develop our role to meet their needs. Here is the action plan developed from the focus-group findings:

Area	Action
Web of Science	Series of WoS drop in sessions for research staff. Non-subject based. Promote vigorously. Attendees contacted by subject team after event to offer additional support.
Announce & promote training	Use research portal.
Research portal	Use to promote all areas that researchers can use including training, subject teams, events etc.
Promote LIS activities, resources etc. better to staff	LIS marketing group set up. This group to discuss and lead in this area.
SCONUL for research staff	Promote through web portal and other means. Mail/posters??
Research events/ research forum events	Follow to see what, if anything, happening with Swansea University research forum. Investigate possibility of running an event in LIC for research staff. Also look for other Swansea University events similar to poster session last year in which to exhibit/participate.
LIS involvement in staff development unit's academic training	Talk to SDU about possibilities: lunch and learn?
Book/journal purchasing and ILL – raise awareness of and of processes	Links on portal to page explaining what the process is and who makes choices – along with link to library reps list
Reference section – check what is happening here	Weeding/signs to promote online resources in relevant sections? Or promotion of online reference resources through a single web page
Online book ordering	Check with systems/book ordering staff. Possible use of Sharepoint forms and workflow if Voyager not user-friendly?
Issues with study areas	As part of possible LIC refurbishment
Demand for various types of support	Continue offering workshops, 1:1, e-mail and phone support. Move library@ e-mail to info desk – and create web page with FAQ and 'phone a friend' links to, e.g., IT support, subject teams, issue desk, ILL for queries. Find a way to log/analyse queries centrally
Voyager	Interface of the future – metalib etc. ...
New resources updates	Mail etc. to staff about latest journals/books in their subject area
New staff contact details	Get automatic alert for new staff by subject

REFERENCES

- 1 Research Information Network & Consortium of Research Libraries Research, *Researchers' use of academic libraries and their services*, London: RIN, 2007, p 9
- 2 See Swansea University Library & Information Services, 'General satisfaction survey 2008', available at <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/lis/aboutLis/reports/> [accessed 20 November 2008]

A good year for the RIN



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The Research Information Network (RIN) had a good 2008, with a number of new projects getting off the ground and new reports published. We also hosted a number of our own events, and were invited to a variety of exciting research information conferences in the UK and overseas.

For those who haven't yet heard of us, the RIN was established in 2005 by the higher education funding councils, the research councils and the national libraries in the UK. We investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the information services provided for the UK research community, how they are changing and how they might be improved for the future. We help ensure that researchers in the UK benefit from world-leading information services, so that they can sustain their position among the most successful and productive researchers in the world.

The RIN team has now grown from four staff members to eight, with the appointments of a new partnerships and liaison officer (Branwen Hide), a research officer (Aaron Griffiths) and myself as communications officer, as well as a team administrator, Catherine Gray. We also have a new PA to the Director, Charlotte Briggs. You can find out more about us at www.rin.ac.uk/taxonomy/term/35.

The focus for our projects over the next few years will be on collaboration and our three strategic priorities: developing the evidence base; providing authoritative advice and guidance; and promoting change. We will also be working hard to ensure the effective dissemination of our projects, targeted at relevant key organisations and groups, and to continue building our relationships with researchers, institutions, funders and others. We have produced a new booklet that outlines our key priorities and provides an introduction to the RIN. It's available on our website at www.rin.ac.uk.

[ac.uk/about](http://www.rin.ac.uk/about) or you can request hard copies by e-mailing me.

Our projects during 2008 have looked at researchers' behaviour in terms of how they use, search for and find information resources, analysing the economics of the scholarly communications system and how it is changing and its impact on researchers and institutions. We also looked at how the growth of digital information is affecting the research processes and how to ensure that high-quality digital information resources continue to be identifiable and easy to access for researchers. Some of our main projects during 2008 included those listed below.

The Research Information Network's (RIN) report, *Mind the Skills Gap: Information-handling training for researchers* (July 2008) finds that training for researchers on information seeking and management is uncoordinated and generally not based on any systematic assessment of needs.

The report focuses on the nature, extent and organisation of the information-related training for researchers that is provided by universities and other higher education institutions. It looks at the roles that librarians and other information specialists play and how the training they provide fits with the wider provision of generic training for researchers.

Developing the personal, professional and career management skills of researchers is currently high on the agenda in the UK's higher education sector. Over the last few years, researchers have enthusiastically embraced new technologies and services that allow them to discover, locate, gain access to and create information resources on their desktops.

In embracing the new opportunities presented by online resources, many researchers have acquired a range of new skills. But librarians and information professionals say that many researchers display alarming deficits in their skills and in their understanding of the new online information environment.

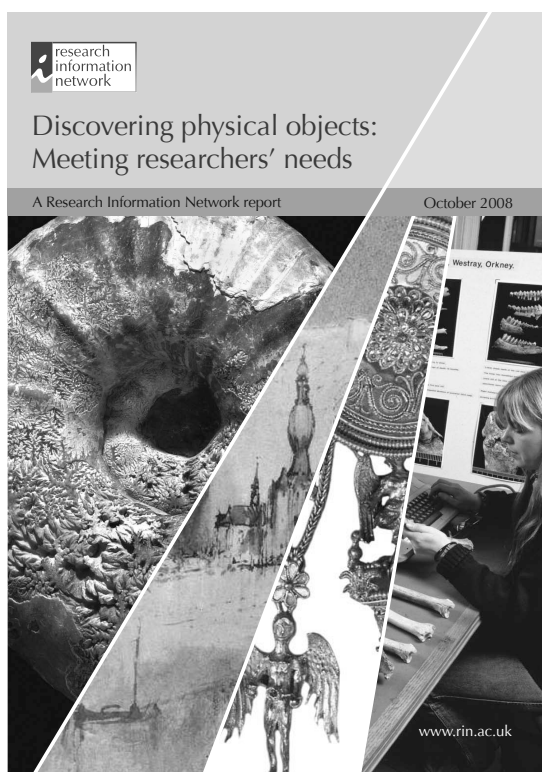
This raises important questions about how researchers acquire the appropriate skills in discovering and handling research information resources and services, the training opportunities provided for them, and the take-up of those opportunities.

You can download the executive summary and the full report at www.rin.ac.uk/training-research-info. The key findings and recommendations are listed overleaf.

Minding the skills gap: developing researchers' skills

The findings from our research into the quality and impact of training in research information methods and the tools provided for researchers by higher education institutions and other agencies found that training for researchers is uncoordinated and generally not based on any systematic assessment of need. Our report, *Mind the skills gap: information-handling training for researchers*, was published in July 2008 and we held an event in Leeds in September 2008 to discuss its recommendations. It was well attended by librarians, representatives from the Vitae hubs (formerly UK Grad), academic team managers and research development officers. Dr Iain Cameron (head, research careers and diversity unit at Research Councils UK) and Janet Metcalfe (director of Vitae) spoke about the current situation and possible solutions for moving forward. We shall

follow this up during 2009 by discussion with the key stakeholders on devising an action plan in response to the report's recommendations.



Researchers' access to objects and artefacts
Collections of objects and artefacts – whether ceramics or shoes, geological or botanic specimens – are important resources for researchers in many subject areas. However, access to these objects, and even to information about them, is often difficult because they may not be catalogued, and even when they are they are not always available to the public and in a lot of cases are not available online. Our report *Discovering physical objects: meeting researchers' needs* (October 2008) looks at how discovery services for objects and artefacts in museums and galleries might be improved to help researchers more readily find the collections that are relevant to their research (www.rin.ac.uk/objects).

The findings suggest that researchers want online finding aids to be available as soon as possible (even if records are incomplete, or considered to be less than 'perfect') and that a number of museums' perceived barriers to getting their collections online could be overcome through collaboration, by sharing expertise and with support from organisations like the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and Collections Trust. Following initial discussions with stakeholders in this sector that are planned for early in 2009, the RIN proposes to hold an event during the spring

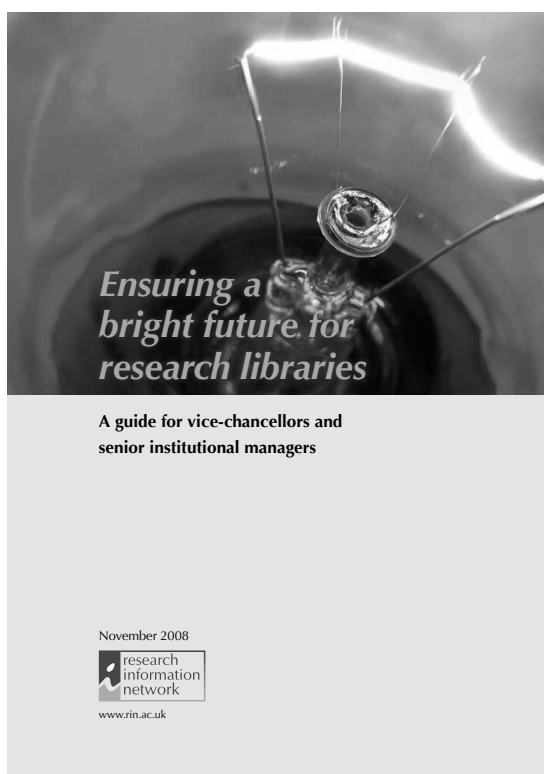
to bring interested parties together and to discuss ways forward.

SHARING AND PUBLISHING DATA: IS IT A GOOD THING?

There are two essential reasons for making research data publicly available: to make them part of the scholarly record, which can be validated and tested, and to make them available for re-use by others in new research projects. Our report *To share or not to share: publication and quality assurance of research outputs* (June 2008), produced with support from JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the Natural Environment Research Council, focuses on why and how researchers make their research data available to others and the issues they encounter when doing so. The findings show that, in spite of policy developments by research funders, these are not always being followed up in practice, and that datasets of potential value (and especially those from small-scale projects) are not managed effectively or made accessible or re-usable. There is a need for greater clarity about the kinds of data that are of sufficient value to be preserved and shared – raw data or processed, derived or reduced datasets – and about the forms in which they should be curated and shared.

COMMUNICATING RESEARCH – WHAT DOES IT COST AND WHO PAYS?

There is a lack of reliable evidence about key features of the scholarly communications system and of what it actually costs the different groups involved in the process. Our report *Activities, costs and funding flows in the scholarly communications system* (May 2008) investigates the costs associated with producing, publishing, distributing and providing access to scholarly journal articles, the cash and non-cash costs involved and how these costs are met. To calculate these costs and look at how changes to the system might impact on the figures, we produced an economic model and focused on four key scenarios – electronic-only publishing, author-side payments for open access, cash payments for peer review and annual increases in research funding – and we came up with some interesting results. Read the full report and discover some surprising figures in terms of the costs incurred by libraries in terms of acquisition budgets in relation to the costs of the scholarly communications process as a whole.¹



In November 2008 we produced a guidance booklet, *Ensuring a bright future for research libraries: a guide for vice-chancellors and senior institutional managers*, which aims to ensure that library and information services keep pace with the evolving needs of researchers. Written by a working group set up to take forward the findings and conclusions from the RIN and RLUK's (Research Libraries UK) earlier report on *Researchers' use of academic libraries and their services* (April 2007), the guide is set in the context of the fundamental changes that digital technologies and online information resources are bringing both to the ways in which research is done and to what researchers expect from library and information services. It offers a framework of six key areas to focus on and encourages senior managers to share good practice (some examples are available on our website; see below) and to ensure that their research information services develop effectively.

RIN OUT AND ABOUT

We were delighted to be asked to speak at a number of high-profile events in 2008, including presentations given in October by the RIN's director, Michael Jubb, at the first RLUK conference, 'The power of knowledge'; at the annual conference of the International Association of STM Publishers in Frankfurt; and also at 'The best of times the worst of times' at the annual Charleston conference in the USA and the 'UK Evaluation Forum', both held in November.

We also organised a number of our own events to promote our research work and reports, to raise debates and encourage key stakeholders to take our recommendations forward. These included 'What does it cost and who pays? Scholarly communications globally and in the UK' in December; joint Digital Curation Centre/RIN workshops on data management in March and November; and an expert workshop, 'World class research needs world class information resources', focusing on the UK's five centres for language-based area studies in December.

We also held our first event specifically for researchers in September 2008, called 'Researchers' use of freedom of information', demonstrating how the Freedom of Information Act can be used as a research tool. We produced a podcast offering highlights of this event for those who couldn't attend.² We plan to hold more events in 2009 to take forward the findings and recommendations of our new projects.³

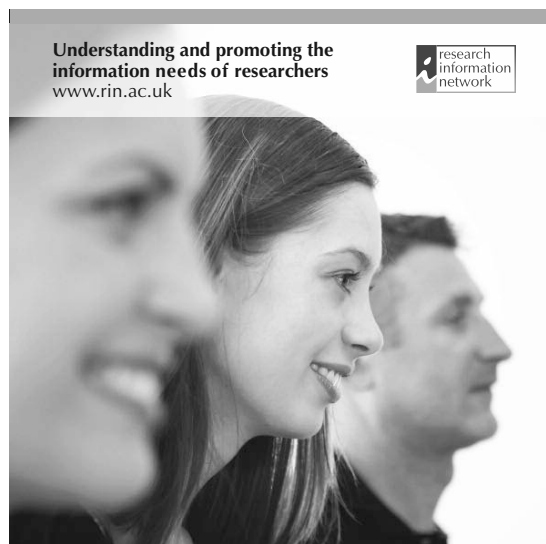
WHAT'S NEXT: PROJECTS FOR 2009

A number of new RIN completed projects will be published during 2009 and some new projects will be getting off the ground.

Projects to be published during 2009 include: a study on the production and dissemination on bibliographic data, to map and identify the current arrangements for creating records and to recommend how the current process might be simplified and improved through better coordination. A project on the use and relevance of Web 2.0 to researchers across different disciplines, which will explore the implications of this new technology for scholarly communications, will try to find out why researchers do or don't use these tools and what the implications might be for institutions, librarians, information professionals and funders.

Later in the year, we will publish a report on how researchers use, manage and create information of different kinds as part of their research methodologies. This project will look at getting an in-depth understanding of how researchers work in practice in different contexts and settings and with different types of information resources. Working in collaboration with JISC, we will be looking at the motivations, incentives and constraints that lead researchers in the UK in different subjects and disciplines to publish and disseminate the results of their work in different ways; at how and why they cite other researchers' work;

and at whether and how their decisions on publication and citation are influenced by considerations arising from research assessment. The RIN has also commissioned the centre for information behaviour and the value of research (CIBER) at UCL to do an analysis of the information-seeking behaviour of and the use of journals and journal articles by academic researchers in the UK, and the resulting findings will be published during 2009.⁴



KEEP IN TOUCH

If you want to keep up to date with our work, sign up to our monthly e-newsletter, which also features news from about general research information issues, events and new resources and publications of interest. To register, e-mail info@rin.ac.uk with the words 'e-news subscribe' in the subject heading.

Our blog continues to be a well-visited part of our website and we post regular updates on key issues and events taking place in the research information world; have a read at www.rin.ac.uk/team-blog. Our website was set up in 2005 when the RIN came into being, so we plan to re-launch the site in 2009, to make the content and design more accessible and contemporary. We'd welcome any comments or suggestions you have about our work, the website or any issues more generally; do get in touch.

REFERENCES

- 1 All of our reports are available on our website at www.rin.ac.uk/rin-activities-projects
- 2 See www.rin.ac.uk/foi-workshop
- 3 Sign up to our e-news to be kept informed (see below) or keep an eye on our website at www.rin.ac.uk/events-menu
- 4 More new projects will begin during 2009; you can find out information about our latest work at www.rin.ac.uk/rin-activities-projects

NoWAL's fifth – a symphony of success



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INTRODUCTION

NoWAL is a consortium of all the higher education libraries in the North West of England – from Carlisle to Crewe, and from the Irish Sea to the Pennines. NoWAL celebrated its fifth birthday as the lead body for higher education co-operation in the region in 2007/08, and here we look back over the consortium's achievements during the last five years.

HISTORY

North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL) became the lead body for higher education library co-operation in the North West of England with effect from the 2002/03 academic year. NoWAL had been formed some two years previously as a shadow organisation to the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester (CALIM).

CALIM had, since its foundation in 1992, established a solid reputation for inter-library co-operation based on the delivery of high-quality staff training and development, reciprocal access and borrowing policies, engagement with diversity issues, consortial purchasing and policy co-ordination. Mindful of the growing importance of the regional agenda in public policy, CALIM council (the governing body of CALIM) founded NoWAL in spring 2000. Its membership comprised the libraries of the University of Liverpool, Liverpool John Moores University, Lancaster and Central Lancashire Universities and all the CALIM libraries, and its objectives were to improve library services to the North West University Association community through co-operation and collaboration. Furthermore, it was agreed that from October 2001 the CALIM staff training and development programme would be opened to NoWAL

members, and that they would also be able to participate in CALIM's procurement activities.

In 2002 both CALIM and NoWAL began to consider the advantages of enabling NoWAL to subsume CALIM and thus to become the lead regional body. It was strongly urged that the establishment of a truly pan-regional lead body for the North West would enable NoWAL to feed into the cross-domain and regional agendas with a stronger and more unified academic voice than had previously been the case. Accordingly, almost all the former CALIM activities were made over to NoWAL with effect from August 2002, and the CALIM secretariat (secretary, support officer, support assistant) became the NoWAL secretariat.

The months preceding August 2002 had seen 100% change in the staffing of the secretariat. The support assistant's and support officer's positions had been filled with new postholders in the spring. Of these, the latter, Gil Young, remains in post at the time of writing (December 2008). I had been appointed NoWAL secretary (subsequently executive secretary) in July, and took up this post, which I still hold, at the end of October.

The executive secretary's first major task in 2003 was to prepare for the admission into membership of the seven remaining North West higher education institutions. During the previous year, NoWAL had resolved to invite the non-university higher education institutions to join as soon as was practicable, in order to strengthen still further NoWAL's position in terms of regional representation. At NoWAL's board meeting in January it was agreed that the librarians of the seven higher education institutions, who had previously indicated their willingness to do so, should join the NoWAL board with effect from the start of the 2003/04 academic year. At that point, NoWAL thus comprised the former CALIM (and subsequently NoWAL) members:

- Liverpool John Moores University
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST)
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of Lancaster
- University of Liverpool
- Victoria University of Manchester
- University of Salford

and new members from the seven remaining HEIs:

- Bolton Institute of Higher Education
- Chester College of Higher Education
- Cumbria Institute of the Arts
- Edge Hill College of Higher Education
- Liverpool Hope University College
- Royal Northern College of Music
- St Martin's College.

All the above institutions remain represented in NoWAL's current constituency, although there have been changes brought about by mergers and the attainment of university status. The Victoria University of Manchester and UMIST merged to become the University of Manchester, and St Martin's and the Cumbria Institute merged to form the University of Cumbria. Furthermore, all but one of the HEIs now have university status, the exception being the RNCM, NoWAL's only conservatoire member.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

One of the consortium's most successful long-term projects has been the further development of CALIM's groundwork in respect of staff development and training. NoWAL has seen the implementation of a staff development and training strategy which includes accredited training, a general programme of short courses and a number of other activities such as job shadowing, exchange of experience events and a programme of summer visits.

For 2006 a programme specifically aimed at middle managers and above was added to the range of activities offered. The consortium also provides support to graduate trainees and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals' (CILIP) chartership candidates by offering programmes of training specially designed to support their professional development.

Since August 2003 around 2,500 library and information staff from the North West and beyond have attended general-programme courses. NoWAL training courses are not restricted to staff from member libraries, and frequently attract registrations from sectors beyond HE, such as further education colleges, school libraries, public libraries, health and the law. When all other events are included, NoWAL has provided training for well over 3,000 staff working in these sectors over the last five years.

The Current Library and Information Practice (CLIP) programme of training (originally devel-

oped by CALIM and now managed by NoWAL) is accredited by the Open College Network North West Region. Some 250 members of staff from institutions across the North West have undertaken CLIP units and have achieved over 2,082 credits; 38 members of staff have obtained the full certificate and a number of these have gone on to further study at degree level. The CLIP programme covers a range of library- and information-related topics including customer service, information skills and training and learning skills. Learners use the CLIP programme in a variety of ways. Some of the registered learners are proposing to obtain the full certificate and go on to study librarianship at degree level. Other learners only intend to register for one unit in order to improve their skills in that area.

In April 2007 the NoWAL training programmes were awarded the CILIP seal of recognition for continuing professional development.

NoWAL AND NetLIBRARY – BIGGEST CONSORTIAL E-BOOK DEAL IN EUROPE¹

As early as 2001, members of the NoWAL board had begun to explore the possibility of offering users access to a large shared e-books collection. At that time, the supplier NetLibrary (in existence since 1998; subsequently a subsidiary of OCLC) had achieved some early penetration in the USA, although its market share elsewhere remained limited. It also seemed to offer the best range of content then available. NoWAL board members noted that, as there were no initiatives (from JISC or any other appropriate forum) to negotiate a national e-books agreement for UK HE, there might be an opportunity for considerable progress in a NoWAL/NetLibrary deal. Their thinking was that NoWAL could possibly use its substantial joint purchasing power to forge a good-value agreement on a larger corpus of e-books than had ever been put before UK HE users, and a contract of this size would be a UK landmark for NetLibrary, which would give the company an excellent foothold in HE.

After lengthy negotiations, an agreement was concluded in early 2004. The main features of the contract were:

- access to 12,000 copyright titles
- access to c. 3,400 public domain titles
- up to three simultaneous users of any one title
- 30 months' duration from February 2004

- NoWAL to 'own' an agreed percentage of the content
- access to owned content for up to five years after contract
- opportunity to 'refresh' (i.e. replace) a percentage of the content each year.

At the time, this was the largest European e-books contract in existence. After launch in February 2004, use of the service increased rapidly, and it continued to be heavily used throughout the term of the contract.

As the contract neared its end in 2006, the NoWAL board opted to retain access to the 'owned' content for a period, rather than to take out a fresh subscription with NetLibrary. It was evident that progress had been made in the way aggregators were able to offer content in the years since the NoWAL/NetLibrary deal was signed, and members indicated a clear preference for a model in which content could be purchased title by title by individual libraries, rather than for another large shared collection. After the reduction of the NoWAL corpus to the 'owned' content, access statistics suffered little, if at all, and this was widely held to be ample vindication of the titles selected for retention. As the statistics continued to remain healthy, the board opted to retain access in summer 2007, and again a year later.

During the second half of 2007, a small working group was convened by the board to explore whether or not consortial terms might be available to NoWAL from e-book aggregators that had started to offer services since the signing of the NetLibrary contract. The culmination of this process came in February 2008 when both Dawsons and Coutts, following demonstrations of both Dawsonera and MyiLibrary, graciously offered unconditional and non-exclusive preferential terms to NoWAL members.¹

RECIPROCAL ACCESS AND BORROWING SCHEME – NoWAL ANTICIPATES UK LIBRARIES PLUS

Ever since its inception, and building on the work of CALIM, NoWAL has always attached much importance to the articulation and implementation of shared policies, particularly in the field of reciprocal access for users to members' services. During 2003, the NoWAL board noted that the then new SCONUL Research Extra (SRX) scheme enabled academic staff and research postgraduates to use, and (within limits) to borrow printed materials from, the libraries of all participating universities and colleges of higher education.

Wishing to add value to the level of service offered under SRX, the board voted to introduce a separate and additional NoWAL reciprocal access and borrowing scheme aimed at taught postgraduates, a group not covered for loans under SRX. This offered reciprocal borrowing rights to taught postgraduates in keeping with the entitlement offered by the loaning library to other external borrowers. This pioneering scheme was operated very successfully from autumn 2003 until summer 2006, when it was overtaken by the decision of the new national agreement, UK Libraries Plus (UKLP), permanently to provide borrowing rights to postgraduate students.

CONSORTIAL PURCHASING – PERIODICALS 2004/05 AND ONWARDS

During the 1990s CALIM established a reputation for excellence in consortial procurement of library materials, particularly serials and monographs. NoWAL made it an early priority to retain and build on this reputation, and the first opportunity to do so presented itself in late 2004, as the existing CALIM and partners' contract for the supply of periodicals was scheduled to terminate at the end of the academic year 2004/05.

A working party was convened to prepare a fresh invitation to tender, and to manage the process of selecting successful suppliers. As with the previous contract, it was decided to invite the participation of a small number of libraries outside the NoWAL membership. The working group was led by Gill Barry, then deputy librarian of MMU, an acknowledged authority on procurement within the consortium. Gill determined that the best composition for the group would be representation of three contrasting member libraries by their heads of serials, the NoWAL executive secretary and a purchasing professional from one of the represented libraries.

With this combination of expertise in place, the team made rapid progress. The group first met in October 2004 and had completed the tender specification by the end of January 2005. The contract was let to three successful suppliers at the end of May, in ample time for the start of the academic year 2005/06. The contract has been, and continues to be, subject to regular compliance monitoring by the NoWAL office throughout its duration.

A broadly similar narrative applies to NoWAL's experience with monograph procurement. With the pre-existing CALIM contract due to expire in July 2006, a working group was established to put in place its successor. The composition of the group was similar to that of its serials counterpart except, of course, that the three selected contrasting member libraries in this instance fielded their heads of acquisitions. The group was convened in November 2005, and had completed the tender specification by March 2006. The contract was let to five successful suppliers at the end of May that year, and will remain in place until 2010. As with serials, suppliers in the monographs contract undergo regular compliance monitoring by the NoWAL office.

At the time of writing, NoWAL is taking a very active role in the preparation of the multi-regional monographs tender proposed by the 'Procurement for Libraries' forum, and led by the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium.

It should be understood that NoWAL's achievements in respect of consortial purchasing are on a numbers of levels. Firstly, the working groups naturally push suppliers or agents for consortial terms that are more favourable than would be available to a single library seeking to let a similar supply contract. However, of at least equal (and arguably greater) value to NoWAL members is the saving in staff time represented by the actions of the small working group on behalf of all the participating members of a large consortium.

CONSTITUTION REVISED 2006

In spring 2005 a review of governance was undertaken at the request of the board. It had been agreed that such a review was overdue following the admission of the seven new partners in 2003/04. At the same time, it was felt desirable to 'de-layer' the consortium's structure. Concern had been expressed among members of NoWAL fora in respect of the number of groups and working parties active within the consortium, and also about the number and frequency of NoWAL meetings that had become necessary. In particular, it was felt that the existence within NoWAL's structure of both a board (comprising service directors and tasked with development of strategy) and an operations group (comprising second-tier senior personnel and tasked with the implementation of

strategy) restricted the speed and flexibility with which NoWAL could respond to new initiatives.

The review was conducted by the executive secretary, who reported his findings to the board at the end of January 2006. The main findings were:

- The board should be retained.
- The operations group should be wound up.
- Standing committees should as far as possible be replaced by task and finish groups.

A revised constitution, incorporating these and other changes, was drawn up by the executive secretary and adopted by the board with effect from April 2006.

With two years' hindsight, it is clear that the new constitution has brought with it considerable benefits. The winding up of the operations group has accelerated communication between board and task groups, and has enabled the board to effect governance with a lighter touch. Task and finish groups (of which the periodicals and monographs tendering working groups are good examples) are more sharply focused than the standing committees which they replaced, and can be convened and dissolved quickly. Furthermore, the expertise of former operations group members is still available to the consortium by virtue of their inclusion in various task and finish initiatives.

NoWAL CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

In early 2006 it was resolved that NoWAL should hold a conference to discuss the issues contingent on the design of learning spaces within higher education. This proposal was led by St Martin's College (subsequently University of Cumbria) and Edge Hill University, both of which had recently completed and opened major new learning-space developments.

The 'Designing Spaces for Learning' conference took place on 8 September 2006 and was attended by 88 people from 48 institutions. The conference addressed four themes:

- the needs of future learners in the context of physical learning space
- how buildings could be conceptualised and designed for learner needs, including features and design principles
- the role of new and emergent technologies
- the implication for staff roles and professional development.

In the feedback received afterwards, delegates praised the high quality of the papers presented, the opportunities for professional debate, the chosen venue and the efficiency of the NoWAL administration team. It was subsequently decided, on the basis of the success of the first conference, that NoWAL should plan additional events in the future on significant professional issues as they arise. Consequently, the second NoWAL conference was held on 5 September 2008. 'Up Close and Personal: our changing roles in a digital learning age' took place at Edge Hill University and welcomed 72 delegates from HE and health-sector libraries throughout the UK.

The conference aimed to explore the following strands in the context of role change and working differently:

- innovative partnerships and relationships that are emerging to enhance e-learning support
- the changing way in which staff engage with their users, and the implications for practice
- new roles and skills emerging as a result of the implementation of technologies in the physical and/or virtual learning environment
- skills development of our users in a digital world, and the impact on our ways of working.

Delegate feedback from this event was once again very positive, and it is highly likely that NoWAL will organise further conferences.

HEFCE CIRCULAR 09/07 – SHARED SERVICES: INVITATION TO SUBMIT EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

In its circular letter 09/07 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) invited HEIs to submit proposals for feasibility studies of the types described in the earlier circular 20/06, 'Shared services: the benefits for higher education institutions'. In this earlier document HEFCE sought to encourage HEIs to move towards a culture of shared services to improve quality and cost-effectiveness. NoWAL's response to the call for proposals was to bid for funding for a shared digitisation brokerage service for the North West region.

There was plenty of evidence for the potential of a shared service to effect savings. A survey of NoWAL member libraries, undertaken in December 2006, had indicated that digitisation was a critical issue across the consortium and that

the majority of members had already invested heavily in this area, in respect of equipment and staff expertise. All had taken out the Copyright Licensing Agency HE trial licence, and all but two had undertaken some level of digitisation activity. One of NoWAL's key operating principles is that collaborative activity should add value to what can be achieved by institutions acting independently. In view of the level of interest and activity in digitisation across the consortium it was clear that real benefits could be found using members' combined strength in this area.

NoWAL was granted funding by HEFCE in June 2007 to undertake a feasibility study. NoWAL appointed a firm of consultants, Liz Hart Associates, to carry out this work, which began the following autumn. The feasibility study was completed in August 2008 and agreed by the NoWAL board in October. The study proposes a shared digitisation project, the main features of which will be:

- the joint procurement of high-quality single and volume digital reproduction services
- shared training and development
- a range of focussed knowledge and networking services, based around an enhanced website making extensive use of Web 2.0 tools.

The project will run for 12 months in the first instance, and will require the appointment of a project officer. Recruitment begins in early 2009. At the end of the first year, the project will be handed over to the NoWAL office for continuation.

CONCLUSION

As NoWAL enters its sixth year, budgetary pressures as well as other considerations increasingly render collaborative working a necessity rather than merely a virtue. The challenge for the consortium will be to support users effectively, given the much wider range of contexts and media in which and by which teaching and learning are delivered.

Students have, by and large, never heard of NoWAL and know nothing of the ways in which our activities have enhanced the services they receive. This is just how it should be. However, students now expect to be able to identify the information they require, irrespective of their physical location, and that it should be delivered to their desktops, in full text, 24x7. NoWAL's priorities must be to develop collaborative initiatives to meet those expectations as they continue to

evolve. It is clear, for example, that, driven principally by the relentless incursion of social networking services into all aspects of information-seeking behaviour, students are developing new modes of interaction with information: the distinction between study and leisure is becoming blurred.

Though students need no separate awareness of NoWAL, the consortium will retain and will act upon a vitally important advocacy agenda among other groups of stakeholders. NoWAL already has a reputation for excellence in collaboration among the management teams of its member universities, but this message would benefit from both wider dissemination and reinforcement. Furthermore, NoWAL will seek to strengthen its regional voice in respect of HE and learning services issues, both on behalf of its own constituents and in liaison with other regional and national bodies.

As NoWAL is a voluntary association of libraries which act consortially only on the basis of mutual self-interest, it often difficult to make progress on chosen initiatives. Members rightly retain their own priorities and can, in any event, only participate in NoWAL projects in the context of their own institution's strategic plan. This being so, as executive secretary I firmly believe that our achievements over the last five years are the more remarkable. I am quite certain that the learning that has accrued to all members in the process will prove an excellent preparation for the future.

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Building on collaboration: the WHELF e-book deal

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In December 2007, at an event at the National Library of Wales, WHELF (the Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum) launched its innovative e-book deal arranged with the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). During the launch event there were various presentations, including coverage of WHELF and its collaborative activities and an overview of the project.

WHELF AND ITS COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

WHELF has a membership comprising the Librarian of the National Library of Wales, the Directors and Heads of Library and Information Services of all higher education libraries in Wales and, more recently, the WHELF Development Officer.¹ WHELF's mission is to promote cooperation among library and information services, to encourage the exchange of ideas, to provide a forum for mutual support and to help facilitate new initiatives in library and information services provision.

Over the last ten years, WHELF has developed from a relatively informal organisation that met twice a year to a much more structured organisation, meeting more regularly and with a more proactive approach, as shown in its range of collaborative projects, an action plan and a separate development group.



(l-r) Jeremy Atkinson, Robin Murray, Scott Wasinger, Paul Riley

Early successes of WHELP included:

- the development of pioneering library access schemes involving all the Welsh higher education institutions (the WALIA (Welsh Academic Libraries Inter-Access) scheme for researchers and the CROESO ('welcome' in English) scheme for students)
- some successful joint project bids, for example the 'Mapping Wales' project funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP)
- a very active staff development and training group (WHISD), jointly operated with the sister IT group HEWIT (Higher Education Wales Information Technology), responsible for a range of activities including a large and successful annual colloquium.

A key period of development for WHELP took place in the period 2002–2003, which was a time of significant strategic change within the higher education sector in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government had put a strong emphasis on reconfiguration and collaboration, which led to the merger in 2004 of Cardiff University and the University of Wales College of Medicine. There was major cross-sectoral change as well with the creation of CyMAL (Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales) to provide an integrated and holistic approach to policy development across the three sectors.

Given these strategic changes, WHELP thought it timely to initiate a major development to build on existing collaboration and to take a more active strategic-leadership role for the Welsh higher education library sector. It achieved this through the HELP (Higher Education Libraries in Partnership) project,² funded by HEFCW (the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales). The HELP project was concerned with the review and development of Welsh academic library collaboration and had four key elements:

- collaboration review: a comprehensive picture of existing and potential collaborative activity within the higher education library sector and between the sector and other relevant sectors in Wales was built up through interviews with HE librarians and librarians in other sectors; desk research was used to provide a UK and international perspective
- feasibility / case studies: two studies, on e-learning and journals, were carried out in areas where there was interest in and potential for collaboration to provide improved services and/or efficiency gains
- action plan: the findings of the project were used to devise an action plan which would provide WHELP with an agreed agenda for future collaboration.

At the end of the project in 2004, WHELP organised a collaboration conference in Cardiff to disseminate and promote the outcomes of the HELP project and the activities of other organisations

active in HE library collaboration. These included SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries), the M25 Group and NoWAL (North West Academic Libraries), whose developments are reported elsewhere in this issue of *Focus*.³

In the last three to four years, WHELF has developed further. A WHELF development group has been set up to develop, revise and monitor WHELF's action plan and to take the lead on some major strategic developments. Key to this work has been the appointment of a part-time development officer, funded by subscriptions from WHELF member organisations. There have been other achievements that link closely to the strategic priorities agreed by WHELF. Two successful repository project bids to JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) have been made, involving all WHELF institutions. Another successful bid to JISC for a digitisation project, 'Modern Welsh Journals Online', was led by the National Library of Wales.

The third major recent achievement has been the e-books procurement project. As a result of the HELP e-learning feasibility study, an objective was included in the WHELF action plan 'to agree a mechanism for achieving cost effective subscriptions with electronic resource suppliers, including e-books'.

OVERVIEW OF THE E-BOOK PROJECT

An email survey was conducted of WHELF members to ascertain the level of interest in a consortium approach to purchasing e-books and also to gather information on which suppliers were being used. The findings of the survey showed that there was significant support for investigating the potential of a shared e-book collection and that NetLibrary was the preferred supplier to begin negotiations.

In April 2007, a steering group was established with representation from each WHELF member. The project objectives were to establish a WHELF NetLibrary shared collection and to establish a group that would be capable of discussing shared e-book purchasing with suppliers.

NetLibrary already had a shared-collection model in use with other library groups and this formed the basis for the WHELF negotiations. The key elements were:

- Each participating library would need to agree to purchase titles outright.
- Each library would need an agreement with OCLC PICA.
- Two copies of each title selected would need to be purchased by the consortium.
- There would be an agreed minimum spend across the consortium.
- From the perspective of users in a particular library, access would be seamless, i.e. there would be a single interface for access to titles previously purchased and for titles purchased as part of the shared-collection model.
- MARC records would be supplied for each partner in the consortium.

It is often difficult enough to agree what titles to purchase within an institution, let alone within a consortium, but this went remarkably smoothly. Each member selected a list of titles from NetLibrary and the consolidated list was checked for duplication and uniqueness. There were few duplicate selections and where there were the cost was split evenly. This took place during July 2007 and the agreement began on schedule in August ready for the start of the academic year. In total, 538 titles were purchased and made available to all students in Wales.

The collection was officially launched at an event in December 2007 at the National Library of Wales. Presentations were made on the project itself as well as setting it in the context of its impact on learning and teaching. This is because the shared collection does not exist in isolation but needs to contribute positively to student learning. This is an area where the JISC national e-books observatory project should prove invaluable.⁴ In addition there were contributions from Robin Murray, vice president global product management, OCLC, and Scott Wasinger, managing director, business development, NetLibrary.

The collection was evaluated in April 2008 by the steering group. NetLibrary provided monthly statistics showing the total accesses across the entire WHELF group as well as a breakdown by individual library. Usage had increased from 1,077 accesses in September 2007 to 3,080 in April 2008. The largest number of titles returned in a month was 465 in February – which, out of 538, is a testament to the staff who selected the titles in the first place. So overall the usage was deemed successful.

What was not so successful was the purchasing of additional titles for the collection. There had been only 27 since the agreement began. The

main reason for this was the need to purchase two copies. This has meant that either an institution has to buy two copies itself or two institutions have to buy one each. The process for seeking another institution's interest is simply an email to the steering group. However, this inevitably builds a delay into the acquisition process and is dependent upon somebody else wanting the same title at exactly the same time, with a budget available. What is much more straightforward – if less altruistic – is to buy one copy for the institution's individual collection. This is perfectly understandable but it does mean that the shared collection has been relatively static.

In addition to reviewing the NetLibrary agreement, possibilities for other e-book developments were also considered. These were investigating shared agreements with other suppliers and widening the consortium's membership to include other sectors such as further education and public libraries. This is at a time when some suppliers are also considering school libraries.⁵ However, it was felt that there had not been sufficient take-up with other suppliers to warrant further investigation and that expansion to other sectors would just make the selection issues worse. However, it will be necessary to come back to these issues in the future.

The preferred option was the possibility of linking all the institutions' individual collections along with the shared collection to create one NetLibrary collection for Wales. This was considered an ambitious target but one worth pursuing. Discussions have taken place with NetLibrary but currently it is highly unlikely that this will be possible.

Therefore, the steering group is considering how to stimulate the purchasing of new titles to the shared collection. One suggestion is for each institution to commit a certain amount on annual basis. In order to prove that this is beneficial there needs to be evidence to show that students from one institution are using titles selected and paid for by another. Another suggestion is to make the joint selection process easier and to encourage institutions to work more closely in partnerships. Other consortiums such as NoWAL⁶ are negotiating framework agreements with suppliers rather than developing shared collections.

It is planned to hold a seminar for WHELP members, not to only explore the specific issues raised by the shared collection but also to begin to assess how both e-books and collaborative purchasing

are impacting upon institutional collection-development policies.

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Set your library staff free with RFID: a case study from Cardiff University

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Cardiff University implemented RFID (radio frequency identification) self-service circulation in three site libraries during summer 2007, and a fourth site is due to go live in January 2009. We undertook a European Union (EU) tender and selected Intellident as our supplier and implementation partner.¹ A major aim of the project was to increase the amount of time available for library staff to liaise with academic schools, and to further develop and deliver information literacy (IL) and research support. We planned to achieve this by freeing our library assistants from as many routine tasks as possible, to enable them to take on other, more interesting roles, including support for the subject librarians who lead the liaison activities.

BACKGROUND

The project to implement RFID self-service circulation arose from the recommendations of the 2004/2005 library review, undertaken following the 2004 merger between Cardiff University and the University of Wales college of medicine.²

The university library service (ULS) of the merged institution has 18 site libraries, ranging in size from the arts and social studies library (ASSL), with approximately 450,000 items and 60 staff, to several smaller hospital libraries operating with a site librarian, one library assistant and less than 10,000 items each. The review identified several inefficiencies in the current structure, including

duplication of effort across the 18 sites, causing a restriction in the time of the professional staff available to support research and learning and teaching activities across the university. In parallel with this was a recognition that we needed to devote more time to supporting the effective exploitation of information resources across the university.

The two major recommendations of the review were an immediate action plan and a strategic plan to 2014/15; the latter recommends the consolidation of the 18 site libraries into 7 (4 of which would remain in hospital sites). So we anticipate economies of scale in the future, but it was also evident that more short-term changes were required, and the expansion of self-service circulation was identified as an option in the immediate action plan. Prior to this project, the only self-service facilities were two 3M 6210 units in ASSL.

The initial intention was to install self-service units in most sites, using the existing barcodes and electromagnetic (EM) tattle tapes for circulation and security respectively, and to trial RFID self-service in one pilot site. Following a successful bid for capital funding, the project team, formed in spring 2006, began drafting the operational requirements (OR) that would form the basis of the EU tender. As part of our research we arranged visits to several other university libraries to view their systems and discuss their implementation processes and any subsequent benefits and service gains. We initially concentrated on libraries using Voyager, the same library management system (LMS) as Cardiff's, and also libraries in the same region. Several libraries very generously provided copies of their OR to assist us in writing ours and, with this almost complete, a number of the team attended the 2006 CILIP 'RFID in libraries' conference.³ We were already aware of the possibilities offered by RFID, and as we continued our research it became clear that it was feasible to consider implementing RFID on a larger scale than we had initially anticipated. The presentations and discussion at the conference reinforced our view that we should be considering RFID for the whole project, rather than just as a pilot in a small site. Having discussed the pros (multiple simultaneous transactions, increased speed and potential stock-management benefits) and the cons (increased cost per site, therefore implementation in fewer sites) we decided that RFID was the best way forward for our project. We contacted some of the conference speakers who had implemented RFID in their libraries and asked for copies of their ORs, to ensure that we

covered all necessary points when revising ours. This delayed the tender date by a couple of weeks, but was worthwhile.

IMPLEMENTATION SITES AND TARGETS

Although we had approximate costs for most equipment and tags, we weren't able to make a final decision on the libraries to be implemented until later in the process, so we identified three definite sites and one or two possibilities, for what we now regard as phase one of the project. Our priority was to install RFID in the Aberconway and Trevithick libraries, because these were both due to undergo major refurbishment, and in the Sir Herbert Duthie library (Duthie) which supports the school of medicine and the NHS staff at the university hospital of Wales. The Duthie library is situated in the main hospital building and we anticipated RFID circulation being a significant step towards extended opening hours and borrowing facilities for all medical staff and students. The final site-library selected was the law library, where we implemented RFID issuing in the short-loan collection.

The decision to limit the number of sites was a consequence of the additional cost involved in purchasing RFID tags and new security gates, in addition to the self-service units. However, the project group realised that implementing in fewer sites would mean that we could concentrate more equipment in each site, leading to shorter queues and hopefully higher usage levels, and therefore we set an initial target of 80% self-service circulation transactions in each site.

Placing more equipment in each site meant that we could remove the circulation desks from these libraries, thus encouraging our readers to try out self-service and see how easy it is. The refurbishments in Aberconway and Trevithick provided an ideal opportunity to plan a smaller, less-obtrusive information desk and give prominence to the new self-service equipment. The law library still has an issue desk for the standard loan collection, but the changes required to install the self-service equipment have enabled us to remove one desk entirely and concentrate the staff effort in one area. The Duthie entrance area was completely transformed when we removed the entire circulation desk along with the work area and partitioned staff offices behind it. The Duthie library assistants now share a larger, more private office and work area, and the whole entrance area has been given over to self-service and casual seating.

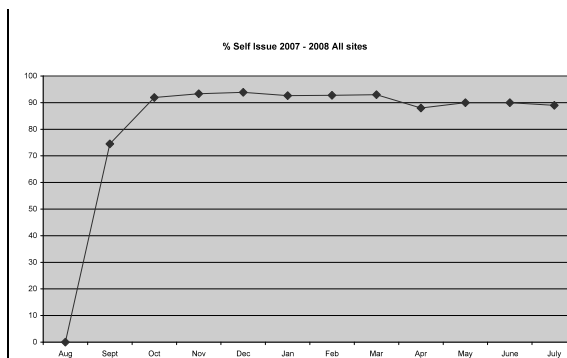


The Duthie library pre-RFID

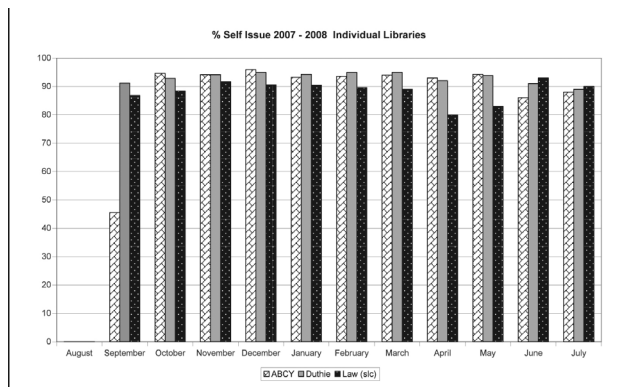


The Duthie library post-RFID

So did we meet our 80% target? As the charts below demonstrate, the libraries met and surpassed the targets almost immediately.



The Sir Herbert Duthie library went live with RFID at the end of August 2008, the law library short-loan collection was live midway through September and the newly refurbished Aberconway library opened at the end of September. The Duthie library's statistics showed 88% self-service in the first week of service, and they continued with over 90% throughout the academic year.



IMPACTS: STAFF, SERVICES AND READERS

Before the introduction of RFID, there were always two members of staff on the Duthie desk and sometimes three at peak times; the rota included the subject librarian and the site head and most staff were timetabled for at least two or three hours each day. All library assistants had specific traditional tasks, such as providing support for inter-library loans, book orders, journal processing, overdue and invoicing, and so on.

Post-RFID there is now one person staffing a much smaller information desk for a maximum two-hour shift. The circulation-desk function has been replaced by two RFID self-service units, with library staff roaming in one hour shifts at peak times. Time freed up in this way has been used to work on new projects, such as a training programme for research staff, a blog for distance learners, participation in the UK Research Reserve,⁴ developing the library pages on Blackboard and converting the library manual into a wiki format. There is now more time available for meetings with module co-ordinators from the school of medicine and with student representatives and also for liaising with the All Wales Health Information and Library Extension Service (AWHILES), which supports medical students on placement in years three to five.⁵

Staff reaction in the Duthie library has been very favourable, with all library assistants welcoming their new, more interesting roles and enjoying the opportunity to provide more detailed help and responses to enquiries during their roaming sessions. The physical changes made as part of the implementation have created a lighter, more pleasant area to work in, which is also more welcoming for the readers.

The students were very impressed with the new service and were soon helping each other to use it. If for any reason a book had to be taken to the information desk (e.g. it had not been tagged) the

students were keen to take it back to the self-service units and issue it themselves rather than have it issued at the desk. The school of medicine and NHS staff were initially concerned that the service might herald job losses for staff, but were reassured by the presence of the roaming staff and now appreciate the increased liaison and support.

Service developments planned for next year include a rolling information audit with the school of medicine and further Web 2.0 activities, for example applying social bookmarking to reading lists and reference consultations for distance learners via instant messaging.

The Aberconway library underwent major changes during summer 2007; the service had operated from two adjacent buildings and the refurbishment offered the opportunity to combine both parts of the service in one building, with a more accessible entrance and an improved, logical layout. The new library has one information desk with a maximum of two staff whereas the previous service needed three or four library staff on the desks. The subject librarians' time has been freed up for more liaison work and staff have taken on more IT support with an increased number of PCs available in the foyer area. Aberconway opened in late September, and monthly statistics show that 46% of all circulation transactions were made via RFID, an amazing achievement considering they were issuing via a circulation desk in a temporary site during the first part of the month.

The law library is operating a hybrid system, with RFID in the short-loan collection but not in the main collection, so we took the decision to implement self-issue but not self-return because this would require the readers to sort their books before returning. However, we have still been able to redesign the entrance area, remove the separate information desk and operate all services from one staffed area, again resulting in a saving of staff time, especially for the subject librarians.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUPPLIER

The RFID implementation at Cardiff University has been successful for a variety of reasons, not least of which is the help and support that the project team have received from other areas in the university. The ULS is part of the information services directorate (INSRV), a merged service which provides library, IT and media services to support all aspects of research, learning and teaching in Cardiff University. The RFID project

team comprises four site librarians from ULS and three members of the library systems development unit (LSDU) who are based in the university systems group (USG); thus we have close links to the IT staff who develop and maintain the network across which the LMS and our RFID system run. The IT staff supplied questions for the OR, attended the site demonstrations from short-listed suppliers and evaluated the responses to their OR questions, so we knew we were selecting a system that they would be happy to run on the university network and one that would not cause any network problems.

The project team was also fortunate to receive advice and practical support from Cardiff University's purchasing section throughout the whole tendering process, from December 2006 up to and including the contract negotiations in May 2007. One of the senior purchasing officers took on our project, advised us to go for a restricted tender, helped us define the pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) points and handled all aspects of the advertising in the *Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)*. Once we had a short-list of four suppliers she arranged all subsequent site visits, the publication of the full OR and all communications between the project team and the companies, including the contract negotiations with Intellident, our chosen supplier.

Before evaluating the OR responses, the project team arranged further visits to four UK university libraries, each one operating one of our short-listed systems. The first set of site visits at the start of the project had given us some excellent general information about operating a self-service system, and each of our short-listed suppliers had demonstrated their systems on site prior to the full OR publication in the *OJEU*, but we wanted to see each system working live in a university library and take the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons with the staff involved in implementing and operating the systems.

Clearly, a critical success factor was ensuring that the RFID system worked correctly with our LMS; we knew that at the time Intellident hadn't implemented their system with Voyager, but had worked with Aleph, the other Ex Libris LMS. So we contacted Ex Libris and they confirmed that Intellident had been very responsive to work with and that they would have no hesitation in working with them again.

Several speakers at the CILIP 'RFID in libraries' conference had emphasised the importance of

clearly stating within the OR that the RFID supplier must take responsibility for ensuring that their software will work with the library LMS software. This was a mandatory requirement in our OR and Intellident have taken full responsibility for this. Indeed they have exceeded our systems librarian's expectations in overcoming any Voyager deficiencies and they have been really excellent to work with throughout. Any remaining limitations in functionality are due to the way in which the SIP2 communication protocol was implemented in Voyager by the previous supplier, but we knew this at the start and were aware that Ex Libris were planning improvements for the next upgrade.

CRITICAL PROCEDURES AND DECISIONS

Three major practical decisions have also contributed to the success of the project: removing circulation desks, removing the loans block for readers with just one overdue item and raising the fines threshold. The latter was an evidence-based decision, taken after investigating what level of charge would allow 80% of readers to borrow books without being stopped and asked to pay fines; the level is £10.00, raised from the previous £5.00. Similarly, allowing readers to borrow when they have just one overdue item allows more use of self-service. Receipts printed at the issue stage list all items on loan, not just items borrowed in the current transaction, so readers are always aware of all items they have on loan, with their due dates.

The biggest impact was definitely the removal/reduction of the circulation desk. The project team's view was that students would be encouraged to use self-service if the units were immediately visible and more prominent than the information desk. Given that the three implementations were taking place in late August and September, the imminent lack of circulation desks, combined with the specific, unmovable deadlines of enrolment week, certainly helped to keep the project on track.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Before we could publicise the forthcoming developments to our readers, we needed to be sure that the library staff were well informed and prepared for the changes so that they would be happy to promote them throughout the libraries. We started by presenting short sessions at library-assistant forums; these are informal sessions run by the University Librarian and deputy University

Librarian and are specifically aimed at the library assistants. Each forum usually has one or two sessions on new developments and a general discussion/question-and-answer session. Two members of the project team presented an introduction to RFID, screen shots of the equipment involved and an outline of anticipated impacts in the libraries. However, the most important part of the session was to reassure all library staff that RFID was not being introduced in order to reduce staff numbers, and to emphasise that the intention was to release them from the repetitive manual handling tasks at the circulation desk to enable them to take on new and hopefully more interesting tasks. We identified two existing areas where more library-assistant time would be valuable: support for subject librarians in their liaison role and in IL sessions, along with increased involvement in managing reading lists. We also introduced the concept of roaming/floorwalking/roving, in the first instance as a new activity to support our readers in their use of the RFID system.

Understandably some library assistants were concerned about the loss of the circulation desk, and in particular about their new roaming role, so the ULS staff development group arranged some approachability training sessions for the staff. These sessions, facilitated by one of the staff from human resources training and development, encouraged the staff to think about their own concerns and anxieties and also to identify positive benefits that might arise from RFID. The session then concentrated on how these concerns could be alleviated, and on discussing ways to approach and interact with readers. In essence, most of these are skills that our staff already use on a daily basis when they interact with readers at the circulation and information desks, but they are usually responding to a reader's approach rather than initiating the dialogue. Some staff had concerns about what they would do whilst roaming and whether they would appear to be just hanging around, so we produced A5-sized crib cards with some key prompts. These had a dual function, to act as reminders of important points to mention to our readers and also to give the staff confidence to approach readers with a purpose. In reality, these cards were discarded after the first day once the library assistants gained a little experience of roaming.

The Duthie went live first, and by week two they were involved in training sessions for the Aberconway staff. The Duthie library assistants led these sessions, demonstrated the RFID system and answered questions. One member of staff in

particular told everyone how much she enjoyed being out in the library, answering questions about all aspects of the service, not just supporting RFID, the underlying message being that you don't realise how constrained you are by the desk until it's no longer there!

Before the summer vacation we ran a poster campaign in the libraries publicising the forthcoming developments so that returning students would be aware of the changes. In the Aberconway and Trevithick libraries this was part of a much wider publicity campaign to ensure that all readers knew their libraries were operating from temporary sites during the major refurbishments.

At the start of the project we had wondered about using flyers to publicise the new service, but the site visits to other libraries convinced us that it wouldn't be necessary, and once the units were installed we could see that they needed no further promotion.

RFID AND LEAN PROCESSES

As part of the preparation for going live, the project team – along with the site heads and operations managers of the RFID sites – participated in two LEAN workshops facilitated by members of Cardiff University's lean enterprise research centre (LERC) to develop more cost-effective working. We plotted the cycle of service for borrowing a book from a reader's point of view, looking at every potential barrier or hindrance, and reviewed every opportunity to improve the experience for our readers. When we compared the anticipated cycle for readers in sites introducing RFID with that for sites with staffed circulation desks, it was clear that if RFID worked as intended it would remove many of the barriers and aspects of what the LERC staff called 'created demand', such as cluttered entrance areas, reshelving delays, queues at desks when readers require help. Our challenge now is to address this in sites that are not implementing RFID in the near future! Fiona Emberton⁶ refers to this streamlining of processes as 'white water rafting', where barriers or created demand are boulders in the reader's journey,⁶ and although it sometimes felt as though we were the ones in the raft, this has been a successful exercise.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we feel that the success of phase one of this project can be attributed to several key

factors, in addition to the practical procedures and decisions noted above:

- a very good relationship with Intellident, brought about with a detailed OR, which in turn arose from the generosity of those institutions that shared their documents with us and from the co-operation and collaboration of other groups in Cardiff University, both internal and external to INSRV
- a good mix of staff on the project group, with a range of different technical and management skills; an unexpected consequence of the various site visits was the team-building during the long journeys, and the opportunity to discuss everything that we'd seen immediately afterwards and explore how it might affect our implementation
- the efforts we made to take the library staff along with us by publicising the project at various events, offering reassurance about their job security and changing roles, implementing training for new procedures and promoting the new tasks available to them.

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- 2 Cardiff University, *Review of the university library service 2004/05 – 2014/15*, 2005; available at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/futures/libraryreview/report/index.html>
- 3 See <http://www.cilip.org.uk/interests/rfid/rfid2006/index.html>
- 4 See <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/40/14.pdf>
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Beyond DEC's



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As part of the European Union's efforts to tackle CO2 emissions, display energy certificates (DECs) are being introduced in some 18,000 public buildings in the UK, including libraries, schools, town halls, museums and job centres. Launched in October this year, they display the energy usage of a building, calculated from gas, electricity and other meters, and communicate overall consumption using a rating from A to G. They are intended to encourage occupiers of poorly performing buildings to take positive action.

It is worth mentioning that some public-sector building performance will be restricted. Energy consumption is influenced by the nature of the building, and older buildings, for example, are much more likely to have lower scores. The British Library, the Parliamentary Estate and the Bank of England have all scored the lowest, 'G', rating. However, occupiers of older premises can still raise their score by improving cooling and heating systems and by simple measures such as switching off lights and computers at night.

No matter what the constraints, the government says that it is vital that the public sector leads the way in reducing carbon emissions and shows how efficiently it manages energy consumption. If display energy certificates are successful, there is every possibility that the initiative will be extended to the private sector.

So how can library occupiers improve their performance? The law does not require occupiers to make changes and strive for a better rating – it only asks that you have and display the DEC on your library wall. However, every DEC must be accompanied by an advisory report, which lists ways in which the energy rating of the building can be improved. This report should be taken seriously and reasonable steps taken to put its advice into action.

BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

The first and most cost-effective step to success is to get staff and visitors on board. The energy they use individually and as a group must become front-of-mind and this means raising awareness, not just sticking the DEC on the wall and disseminating the information on paper. You effectively need to change preconceived ideas and habits that have been ingrained over time. This means that you have to truly engage people to make real and lasting improvements to behaviour.

I use the analogy of rearranging deck chairs on an ocean liner. You can move the deck chairs around as much as you like, but it will not influence the speed and direction of the boat or alter the behaviour of crew and passengers. A boat is only as good as its crew and captain – it needs leadership as well as shared responsibility. Similarly, a building is only as good as its occupiers and users.

Those in charge of libraries must take the lead. They need to communicate that energy efficiency is as much about human behaviour as it is about the age and physical operation of the building, so that staff and visitors recognise and embrace their personal responsibility for using the building in an energy-efficient way. They need to understand the rating and what action they can take to improve it, and therefore what is expected of them.

Critical to getting everyone on board is the way energy data is communicated and displayed. Energy management doesn't have to be dry and dusty and to focus solely on the technical challenges of metering and monitoring of consumption. In fact, quite the opposite – it can be brought to life so people want to participate. One excellent and visually compelling method is the use of real-time information from meters displayed on LCDs (liquid crystal displays) in the reception area or other work areas. Other cost-effective ways include the use of graphics and visuals that grab attention.

To maintain momentum, give library staff responsibility and appoint 'energy champions' who can spread the word, encourage and enthuse. If the library building is shared with other occupiers, create an 'energy' or 'green team' to share ideas and information, get new initiatives under way and overcome any practical challenges. Most importantly, to ensure efforts don't dwindle, keep everyone updated with reports that capture data, highlight energy-consumption patterns and show

how well the library is performing against targets and benchmarks.

OPERATIONAL CHANGE

Alongside improvements that are brought about by behavioural change, there are plenty of practical options that can deliver operational efficiencies. The solutions chosen must be suitable for the building and the way it operates, and advice should be taken to determine the best for each library.

To get above a 'C' rating can require significant capital expenditure but there are also plenty of inexpensive methods on offer. Here are some ideas:

- Install low U-value double-glazed glass to prevent heat loss. Double-glazing typically halves the heat loss experienced with single glazing. A ten-metre section of single glazing loses 700W of energy during the winter, dropping to about 350W with double glazing.
- Consider replacing lights. High-efficiency fluorescent lights, energy-efficient lamps and high-performance lighting ballasts reduce energy consumption. Extended-performance fluorescent lights, also available in long-life, cost £2 and use less energy than £2.50 tungsten halogen flood beam or incandescent lamps. Compact fluorescent lights use 50–80% of the energy of incandescent lights. A 22W compact fluorescent light has the same output as a 100W incandescent light, equivalent to a saving of approximately £78 per lamp (over its lifetime) in terms of energy use.
- Incorporate intelligent lighting controls. Through the use of occupancy sensors and daylight sensors, artificial lighting can automatically adjust to provide light only when the space is occupied and there is insufficient natural light.
- Install occupancy sensors in washrooms, which cost £17.70 per lighting circuit.
- Consider combined heat and power (CHP) plant, which generates electricity and utilises the heat by-product. It therefore achieves an overall efficiency of fuel use of 75%, compared to 50% with conventional electricity generation.
- Upgrade the building management system, to include optimised starts and stops, active modulation of fans and pumps via variable speed drives and outside air temperature

lockout to turn off central plant when external conditions are favourable.

- Optimise natural ventilation to lessen the cooling requirements, while also creating a better environment.
- Shut windows at night in winter and save 15g of CO₂ and £2 per office per night.
- Turn the thermostat down by 1°C and cut heating bills by 10%.
- Use rainwater or recycled water, low-flush systems and leak-detection systems. A cistern water-saving device costs £20.
- Tankless hot water heaters are 98.5% energy-efficient and save up to 50% on water-heating costs.
- Use recycled materials and recycle the waste generated by the day-to-day operation of the library.

Switch off machines at night.

All of these recommendations – and there are plenty more – reduce your energy consumption and therefore they also reduce your energy bills. They must be seen as an investment and assessed on their payback over time. The operational performance of a building requires taking a long-term view.

A CASE STUDY: A UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

We have recently completed a DEC for a university library, which had scored a 'D' rating. The library, which was originally built in the first decade of the twentieth century, had recently been renovated to include a café and reading areas. The mixture of the old infrastructure and new technology meant the building registered at a 'D' grade, or what is classed as typical practice. While the occupiers were happy with this grade, during our survey we discovered that the energy consumption could be reduced by a further 25%, which would give the library a 'B' rating.

The operation of the new technology had been left unchecked, with the heating, ventilation and lighting systems all running longer than required. In addition, due to budget constraints, the more energy-efficient versions of building services plant were cost-prohibitive so lower initial cost options were installed, resulting in considerably higher running costs. The project is expected to pay back in less than four years. Emphasis has been placed on operational efficiencies and encouraging behavioural change.

A FINAL WORD

As a 'public' facility, corporate social responsibility is high on the agenda of any library, and engaging people and reinforcing green credentials is no bad thing. If, at the same time, you can engage with staff and members of your user community for the greater good, while reducing your energy costs, why wouldn't you do it?

Library services for all ages, all abilities and all levels – welcome to Buxton!



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In 1998 the University of Derby merged with a further education (FE) college based in Buxton, some 35 miles north of Derby. The existing site was fairly run down and was situated at Harper Hill just outside of the town centre. One of the first initiatives by the university was to establish a campus in the centre. This led to the university taking over the Devonshire Royal Hospital, the former grand stables of the duke of Devonshire, a historical landmark in the centre of Buxton. In 2005 the new Devonshire campus opened and became home to one of the university faculties – the University of Derby, Buxton (UDB). The

faculty has two parts to it – the school of culture and lifestyle and the Buxton College of further education.

We are probably unique in the range of support we have to offer; with students studying at a basic skills level through to PhDs, the library has to serve a diverse spectrum of users. Our FE students can be aged 14 upwards. There are over 900 16–18-year-olds enrolled on full-time courses, studying various vocational programmes typical of a general FE college. We have pre-entry students and those with learning disabilities and additional needs. FE also services the community and adult learners, with a range of part-time courses from dry-stone walling to counselling. The higher-education (HE) school of culture and lifestyle has nearly 1,500 students studying foundation degrees through to research degrees. The general public are welcomed onto campus to use student training facilities and they also have open access to the library as a reference resource. The building is very much a tourist attraction in the town, and so we have visitors wandering through, plus many ex-patients and staff of the hospital, keen to see what it looks like now and to reminisce.

So what are the challenges of delivering a library service for a mixed-economy campus? You have to be aware of working with two different funding streams and two different quality systems (QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Educa-



Main entrance to the Devonshire campus, Buxton.

Credit Sally Edwards, University of Derby.



Devonshire Learning Resource Centre.

Credit Sally Edwards, University of Derby

tion) a few weeks ago, Ofsted next week!) and, in terms of service, to have as little differentiation as possible. Although services to both groups of students are essentially the same, we produce separate guides to the library service. These reflect a wish to use slightly different language, terminology and presentation styles, as well as a need to emphasise different resources for the students. Any posters or signs are checked for accessibility of language – this is good practice in any library, but something we do need to be especially aware of.

In setting up the service one of the first considerations was opening hours. To reflect HE needs and expectations, evening and weekend opening were essential. The FE term is 35 weeks and the HE term is 32 weeks, and, as these weeks do not always match up, we have to commit to a minimum of 40 weeks of term-time opening. Our library management system does not allow us to treat FE and HE students differently in terms of which weeks library fines apply. So although FE and HE students get fined in the same weeks, they are *different* weeks to students on the Derby campus – we do not fine during the FE half-term break, but we start fining earlier in the academic year. We still reduce our daytime staffing levels during the FE half-term weeks, on the basis that there are fewer students using the library and that HE students should be more independent. It is noticeable that HE student activity in the library is starting to increase during these weeks, with HE students making the most of having the space

to themselves. Time to put in a bid for more staff hours, maybe?

Levels and type of staffing also have to cater for both groups, and have their roots in FE provision. We have a library facilitator role that came very much from FE needs, and this post does not exist in the other University of Derby libraries. Our facilitators provide a lot of IT support to the students, and we have expanded the role to include general support for library resources. They deliver inductions and workshops to FE students, while subject librarians deliver library and information skills training to the HE students. With our duty-of-care responsibility to students under 18, we have a commitment to supervise all areas of the library. This means having to staff both the circulation desk and the helpdesk in the main room during FE term weeks, including evenings and weekends.

The resources budget is allocated as a whole, and the subject librarians divide it between FE and HE subject areas. There is obviously a little overlap in the titles we purchase, but of course we have resources for all levels, from our read-ability collection, aimed at adults with low reading skills, through to examples of dissertations. We have made the decision not to segregate the core collection, or to mark titles aimed at one level or another. Students can access anything on the shelf, and we did not want any group of students to feel excluded from using any of the stock. Classification is standard, although we would take the

simple option rather than make it complex with long strings of numbers. Mindful of our younger users, 15- and 18-certificate DVDs are kept in security cases, so all students have to bring them to the desk before they can watch them in the library!

It may seem strange, but our FE students can access more online resources than our HE students. We subscribe to some FE-specific online resources, and the rate we pay is based on the number of FE students, rather than the higher band, based on the total number of university students. We therefore block access to these resources to HE staff and students. There are no such restrictions on the HE online resources, although many are at an inappropriate level for most of our FE students, and so we would not expect great usage by them.

There is little direct conflict between HE and FE students in the library. However, at HE programme committees and in user surveys one of the biggest recurring complaints from the HE students is around 'college kids using the computers to play games' and the amount of noise the 'pesky FE students' make. This is then followed by requests for a separate HE study space in the library.

Having separate FE and HE areas in the library was something we gave a lot of consideration to when we were setting up the library. We decided not to segregate the students in the library for a number of reasons. Firstly, the very practical: we have finite space, and there are English Heritage restrictions on building walls and partitions. To restrict one of the few rooms in the library to one group of students would limit our flexibility. We recognised the need to cater for students wishing to study in different environments so we have a group-study room, a silent-study room and a casual 'coffee 'n' cake' area available to *all* students. Monitoring use of a restricted area would be difficult – it is not always obvious who is an FE or HE student. Secondly, we wanted to reflect the philosophy of the campus – the aim is not to have segregation of the students. All students can use the bistro, oasis space and other central areas.

We do, however, offer a number of specialist services to specific groups of students. At certain points of the year we reserve one of the IT rooms for dissertation students. We have a laptop short-loan scheme, which only HE students can make use of, to give them a little more flexibility. The study advisor scheme (a peer-mentoring support

scheme) that the library has been successfully running in Derby was expanded to Buxton, but only for the HE students. (Our FE students have other additional support available to them through the curriculum.)

It is no surprise to hear students complain about too much noise in the library and not enough computers. These themes are common at the main Derby library as well. At Buxton, however, the HE students often blame the FE students for any problems, including litter, noise, swearing and use of Facebook. I find this generalisation frustrating, and it is just not true – although I'm not saying that all the FE students are angels! Some students behave responsibly and others don't. We know there are noisy HE students and quiet FE students, and vice versa. It was interesting to note a comment made at a recent programme committee, where a HE student observed that it had been just as noisy in the library during FE half-term, when mainly HE students were in! We all know that managing student behaviour is difficult, but how about that other group of users?

One of the hardest areas to balance is the different ways HE and FE lecturers want to use the library with their students. The FE lecturers often want to bring a group to the library – which is of course fantastic. However, when they're teaching to a group in the main area it can be very disruptive to other students working independently. To make sure we can provide enough drop-in space for students, we try not to book all the rooms out to groups at the same time. We've worked closely with the academic staff and tried to respond to their needs, while taking a holistic view of how other groups want to use the service.

One of the key things to consider is the advantages and disadvantages to the students in our mixed-economy library service. FE students get access to a far greater variety of resources, especially online resources, than in a comparative FE college. FE students wishing to stretch themselves have easy access to higher-level texts. The library's opening hours are longer than many FE colleges would normally provide, especially across seven days a week, which benefits many of our adult part-time learners. Many of our HE students would say that having the FE students around was the main disadvantage. They are perhaps less quick to spot the advantages. However, the extent of staff support they get, our commitment to always having a staffed helpdesk and the quick 'just-in-time' IT support is there because of our FE students, and I know from feedback

that it is something they value. The range of resources supports HE as well, and if students are studying a new subject area, they often use books aimed at FE students to gain their basic understanding before moving to the undergraduate texts. Although we deliver different induction programmes to different student groups, we have very much borrowed good practice from each strand. So elements that were initially developed for FE students, such as using voting pads, have been used with good effect with HE groups. IT help-sheets that were adapted and simplified with the FE students in mind are heavily used by the HE students.

The staff working in the library have gained skills from working with the diverse range of students, and they are able to get involved in a wide range of activities, from display work to support the government's 'Every Child Matters' agenda to organising poetry readings with our HE students. I think it's very much the best of both worlds.

SCONUL working group on information literacy

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The SCONUL working group on information literacy has been actively working on a number of initiatives designed to invigorate and re-invigorate interest in information literacy through contact, collaboration and profile-raising events.

The action plan for 2008–9/10 identifies a number of strands, some designed to achieve a short-term win, others – such as building up relationships with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and European and international information literacy organisations – have longer-term aims. This short update provides a flavour of the recent and current work of the group.

PROGRESS ON INFORMATION LITERACY AND RESEARCHERS

A successful one-day seminar, 'Information strategies for researchers – where are we making a difference?', jointly organised with CONUL (Ireland's Consortium of National and University Libraries) and held at Dublin City University, attracted over 80 delegates. The seminar covered papers from a range of perspectives: career researchers, librarians supporting the needs of researchers and librarians working on strategic initiatives (at both institutional and national levels) designed to integrate information literacy into formal structures.

A review of the seminar appeared in the last issue of *SCONUL Focus*¹ but, as a reminder, the key messages from the day can be summarised as:

- researchers are not a homogeneous group – attention needs to be paid to the different priorities and needs of individual researchers as their careers progress

- the complexity of a researcher's environment is in part informed by the variations which exist across disciplines and the different forms of research undertaken
- the focus for training should be on the complex processes of information management, rather than on information literacy alone
- practical advice for early career researchers might focus on support for publication
- the importance of collaboration with stakeholders is a key success factor – at all levels, faculty, institutional, national and international.

Following on from this successful event, other activities have included a collaborative partnership with the North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL) consortium² to deliver a series of workshops to enhance academic librarians' support for researchers and planned discussions between ourselves RLUK (Research Libraries UK) and the CILIP CSG (Community Services Group) information literacy group, to identify how best to maximise our combined expertise. And there exists the potential to feed into and inform the modelling of the 'academic library of the future'.

The *impact of the '7 pillars model'* on the design and delivery of information literacy across the UK forms part of the on-going research activities of the group; phase one of this study is to gather some quantitative feedback from member institutions in order to build up a comprehensive overview of the use and implementation of the model. This will be supplemented by an event to mark the tenth anniversary of the launch of the 7 pillars model for information literacy in 2009, which we hope will attract participation from national and international information professionals. The 7 pillars model has afforded the profession a key point of reference; for many colleagues it has offered a credible starting point for discussion about information literacy with academic colleagues; it has provided a framework on which to build instructional materials and content for the delivery of information literacy; and it has established SCONUL as a key driver in the development and uptake of information literacy across the higher education sector. The enduring nature of the model – the fact that it is still being used as an exemplar for good practice – is in no small part due to the professional and intellectual acumen of the founding members of the SCONUL working group for information literacy.

This event will be, in part, a celebration of the model, but more significantly it will examine how

the model has been interpreted, built on, customised, improved, used and re-used and even perhaps abandoned for an alternative approach. It will look to the future and the place of information literacy in relation to life-long learning and employability. It will aim to challenge and question assumptions made about information literacy that are implicit within the model and consider what options the future holds and the role the SCONUL WGIL might play. It is hoped that the event will attract presenters from across the globe who can demonstrate the impact information literacy has had on their professional practice and its role in changing and influencing relationships with key stakeholders at all levels: local, national and international.

More details about this event will be publicised in early in 2009.

The group is aiming to further joint working and collaboration with the HEA and a number of options have already been discussed with David Sadler, the HEA's director of networks. More specifically, the group aims to look at ways to jointly promote the roles of the national teaching fellows (NTFs) to colleagues; to conduct a survey of SCONUL members' perceptions of the HEA; to examine ways in which librarians can play a more active role in the HEA ICS (Information and Computer Sciences) subject centre; and concurrently to explore ways in which the subject centre can support the staff-development needs of librarians. Work on these and other activities will continue into the future, with the key objective of raising the profile of information literacy for a wider audience.

Contact has also been made with the LearnHigher Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL)³ and in particular the strand of the work of the CETL that has a specific focus on information literacy. Bob Glass from the department of information and communication at Manchester Metropolitan University has discussed with the group a number of joint initiatives which might be pursued; these include acting in an advisory capacity for the development of learning objects, making a contribution to a planned publication on 'literacies in HE' and providing support for various research initiatives.

Further dissemination of the work of the group will take place at the 2009 LILAC conference, where the focus will be on developing support for researchers.

For further information on any of the above initiatives, contact Jan Howden, chair of SWGIL (j.howden@gcal.ac.uk) or Alison Mackenzie, secretary of SWGIL (Alison.Mackenzie@edgehill.ac.uk).

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CILIP/SCONUL Health Strategy Group

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NATIONAL REVIEW OF NHS HEALTH LIBRARY SERVICES IN ENGLAND

The National Review of NHS Health Library Services in England carried out by Professor Peter Hill, was published in March 2008. The report provides an excellent summary of the current state of play in NHS libraries, and its 50 recommendations provide a road map for future development. Our most recent activity in this area has been an open letter written to Professor Hill outlining areas where we might work together to review some of the issues raised in the report.

The health information environment continues apace, and the last few months have seen some significant publications from the Department of Health. The much anticipated Darzi report was published in June, confirming the strategic importance of evidence in health care.

On 10 July 2008 the Department of Health issued the Health Informatics Review Report. This report provides a very accessible insight into NHS plans to introduce sophisticated IT support. But it's not just IT – there's access to knowledge for staff and to trusted answers on health and wellness for the public. Of particular interest is the creation of the post of 'Chief Information Officer for Health, reporting to the NHS Chief Executive and sitting on the NHS Management Board'

On the subject of working with the public, in April 2008, The Department of Health issued. Choice Matters - working with libraries. This examines the potential role for public libraries with groups who require help, either with information or with IT, to make health care choices.

COMING UP

Over the next few months we will be inviting some additional significant stakeholders to join the Health Strategy Group, so that we can truly represent the wide range of activity in the health field. We are also reviewing our terms of reference to ensure that they meet the needs of our sponsors into the future. In addition, our website is at last up to date.

And finally...My term as Chair comes to an end in December 2008. The new Chair, nominated by Cilip, is Bruce Madge, who is well known to many SCONUL members. Bruce is currently enjoying a busy year as Cilip President and he will bring a wealth of experience and contacts to his work as Chair of the Group

RLUK/SCONUL digest of scholarly communication news

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This is taken from the 'Research Libraries UK/ SCONUL Digest of Scholarly Communication News' of October and December 2008. This online newsletter (supplied to SCONUL representatives in member libraries) is a service provided by the RLUK/SCONUL group on scholarly communication for internal distribution to staff of library and information services in SCONUL institutions.

The group also encourages the use of the digest to inform academic staff within universities in the UK and Republic of Ireland of developments in scholarly publishing.

NO 'BLACK HOLE' FOR PHYSICS PUBLISHING – BUT AN OPPORTUNITY UNDER THREAT!

Unfounded fear of the end of the world caused by the new large hadron collider (LHC) accelerator at CERN is matched by unfounded fear of the demise of physics publishing caused by the new CERN-led SCOAP3 (Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics) model for physics publishing. Physics publishing will not disappear into a 'black hole'! The signs of a willingness by physics publishers to experiment with new publishing models are in the announcement by Elsevier, Springer and SISSA/IOP (International School of Advanced Studies and Institute of Physics) that they will publish the first results from the LHC on open access without requiring publication fees to be paid, and – although this was not related to the LHC – in the decision by the American Physical Society to launch a new open access journal, *Physics*. Before making a longer-term commitment to open access, publishers are looking for a willing-

ness by research institutions, funders or libraries to convert subscription payments into open access publication fees. SCOAP3 continues to receive new pledges of support from libraries across the world for its consortium-based open access model (see news of the latest SCOAP3 partners at <http://scoap3.org/>), but many libraries have still not decided on a willingness in principle to support the SCOAP3 model. Like the benefits from the LHC accelerator, the benefits from SCOAP3 will only be realised when the new model is at full power, the power for SCOAP3 coming from the support of libraries and publishers. The SCOAP3 model was designed specifically to meet the needs of disseminating research results from the LHC, and it is to be hoped that this opportunity will not be lost as the results from the LHC emerge.

Support for SCOAP3 is growing, though, and CERN now have pledges of support from research organisations and libraries who spend on subscriptions half of the 10 million euros per annum necessary to make the switch from subscription to OA publishing for the high energy physics journals. A similar world-wide commitment – albeit on a smaller scale – to finance the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* took around three years to secure the necessary funding. Meanwhile publishers continue to show interest in SCOAP3 if the model can be shown to be viable. *Europhysics Letters* has joined *European Physical Journal C*, *Nuclear Physics B* and *Physics Letters B* in offering OA publication free of charge to authors on a temporary basis. All now depends upon the willingness of other research organisations and libraries to express interest in joining SCOAP3.

'BIG DEALS' GIVE INVESTORS CONFIDENCE – AND LIBRARIES FUNDING PROBLEMS

Librarians may be glad to know that the big deals they sign up to are helping to restore economic confidence in these troubled times! An article in the business section of the London *Times* on Saturday 13 September considered media-sector stocks as possible good buys, and on the whole concluded that they are a risk, except for the following: 'RBS believes that the sector's more defensive stocks – such as Reed Elsevier, which has been able to lock in customers through multi-year deals – are worth sticking with.' The other side of this coin is that libraries locked into multi-year deals have to find extra funds to pay for changes in exchange rates at a time when the value of sterling is falling. The joint RLUK (Research Libraries UK)/SCONUL scholarly communications group would value information

from libraries about extra costs incurred due to exchange rate fluctuations.

NIH DEPOSIT THREATENED BY BILL

Meanwhile in the US a new threat to the increasingly successful deposit of publicly funded research into PubMed Central and other repositories has arisen through the introduction into the House of Representatives of a bill that would effectively reverse the NIH (National Institutes of Health) public access policy, as well as make it impossible for other US federal agencies to put similar policies into place. The legislation was introduced by representative John Conyers and is entitled 'Fair copyright in research works act' (<http://judiciary.house.gov/hearings/pdf/HR6845.pdf>). The bill is drafted very broadly, aiming to change current US copyright legislation and prohibit the public availability of works resulting from public funds where there is 'meaningful added value' to the work by a third party (publishers would make such a claim). Several thousand biomedical articles per month are currently being deposited in PubMed Central, and the bill, if passed, would stop this flow of information to all US citizens and to many researchers outside the US who use the PMC database.

US PRESIDENTIAL VIEWS ON RESEARCH

It is reported that US President-elect Barack Obama has formed an inner circle of science advisers including Harold Varmus, a Nobel prize winner who has championed open access.

VENTUROUS AUSTRALIA: INNOVATION REPORT SUPPORTS OPEN ACCESS

A comprehensive review of innovation policy in Australia – <http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Documents/NIS-review-web.pdf> – contains the following amongst its many recommendations: 'Australian governments should adopt international standards of open publishing as far as possible. Material released for public information by Australian governments should be released under a creative commons licence ... A specific strategy for ensuring the scientific knowledge produced in Australia is placed in machine searchable repositories should be developed and implemented using public funding agencies and universities as drivers.' The review recommends that these specific measures should be introduced as part of a national information strategy 'to optimise the flow of information in the national economy'. For a British reader of the

review it is curious to read that 'to date progress in Australia [on open access] has been patchy and lacking the comprehensiveness and boldness of leading countries such as the UK'. Perhaps 'the grass is always greener'? In responding to the *Venturous Australia* report, Industry Minister Kim Carr said, 'The arguments for stepping out first on open access are the same as the arguments for stepping out first on emissions trading – the more willing we are to show leadership on this, the more chance we have of persuading other countries to reciprocate.'

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN WILL PRINT YOU A BOOK WITHIN MINUTES

With the installation of a state-of-the-art book-printing machine at one of its libraries, the University of Michigan is able to offer printed and bound reprints of out-of-copyright books from its digitised collection of nearly 2 million books, as well as thousands of books from the Open Content Alliance and other digital sources. The cost is about US\$10 per book and the service is available to researchers, students and the general public. The printing process takes between 5 and 7 minutes, depending on the number of pages. The University of Michigan was the first participant in the Google Book Search Program. For more information see the press release at <http://www.ns.umich.edu/htdocs/releases/story.php?id=6735>.

NEW RESEARCHER-LED DEVELOPMENTS AT UK PubMed CENTRAL

The eight leading biomedical research funding organisations that fund UK PubMed Central have consulted with researchers and authorised developments to the UK PubMed Central website (www.ukpmc.ac.uk) over the next three years. The developments will be carried out by the British Library, the University of Manchester and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory's European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI). Since being launched in January 2007, UKPubMed Central has grown to offer 1.3 million full-text, peer-reviewed research papers through its online digital archive. The new and improved features will include direct links to the 18 million records currently available on the US version of PubMed as part of the EBI's CiteXplore bibliographic tool, new ways to extract biological information from research papers using text analysis and data-mining tools, access to content not included in traditional journal literature such as clinical guidelines, technical reports and conference proceedings and an easy-to-use, intuitive inter-

face. Press release available at <http://www.bl.uk/news/2008/pressrelease20080916.html>.

IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY MANDATES OPEN ACCESS

The Higher Education Authority of Ireland has issued a policy statement requiring all its funded researchers to 'lodge their publications resulting in whole or in part from HEA-funded research in an open access repository as soon as is practical after publication, and to be made openly accessible within 6 calendar months at the latest, subject to copyright agreement'. The adoption of this policy follows a period of consultation and is in line with EURAB (European Research Advisory Board) and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) recommendations. The text of the mandate is available at http://www.heai.ie/files/files/file/Open%20Access%20pdf_.pdf.

MAX PLANCK SOCIETY AGREES PAYMENT OF PLoS FEES

The Max Planck Society have entered into an agreement with the Public Library of Science to pay the publication fees for all MPS researchers with articles accepted for publication in the PLoS open access journals. The initiative came from the Max Planck Digital Library, which is having a major influence upon open access developments in Germany. The PLoS journals have set high quality standards for their journals and clearly feel happy partnering with a major research organization like MPS. The press release is available at http://www.mpg.de/pdf/presseExtern/mpdl_pressRelease.pdf.

NEW SHERPA RoMEO FEATURES

SHERPA has announced the availability of three new features in its RoMEO service. The RoMEO homepage now includes a 'News' section, which has been added to help users stay up to date. The 'Recently added publishers' section allows users to benefit from being able to see the latest RoMEO additions at a glance. And RSS feeds are now available with the 12 latest additions to the RoMEO site. In addition, this information is now available in the form of an e-mail alerting service. If you wish to sign up for this service please contact Jane H. Smith at jane.h.smith@nottingham.ac.uk.

ARE WE ON THE ROAD TO FREE TEXTBOOKS?

They may only be straws in the wind easily blown away – but this year I have been noticing more messages on the various lists about the future of book publishing. The first message to make my antenna twitch was an announcement that a new book from Cambridge University Press, *Against intellectual monopoly* (on the economics of intellectual property) by US economists Michael Boldrin and David Levine, is available for a free download (we would not normally associate the topic of IP with a free download!). This announcement was followed in April by an ‘Open textbooks statement to make textbooks affordable’, signed by 1,000 professors from 300 US colleges. And a further sign that the book business model may be changing came when the *New York Times* published both an editorial on the high cost of textbooks – citing Rice University’s offer of free online textbooks to its students – and an article entitled ‘Don’t buy that textbook, download it free’. And on 22 September *New York* magazine suggested that there is a general crisis in the book-publishing industry in an article headed ‘The end’ (influenced by current gloomy predictions about the economy?). We should watch this space.

WILL THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC SITUATION CHANGE SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION?

Libraries in Europe and North America are reporting major budget cuts and reductions in spending power due to the global economic situation. In Europe (so far) the reduction in spending power is predicted to be due to the fall in exchange rates of some currencies against the euro and of European currencies against the US dollar. In the UK this effect will be mitigated very marginally by the temporary reduction in the value added tax (VAT) rate, which will make the cost of electronic content cheaper to purchase during 2009, but it is not so big a reduction as to negate the effect of exchange-rate fluctuations. In the US the problem lies not in exchange rates but in the substantial cuts in public funding for libraries, particularly at the state level. Libraries are reporting that cuts in endowment funding due to the fall in value of stocks and shares could mean a reduction in library funding of at least 10%. It is still unclear how libraries will deal with cuts of this magnitude. On both sides of the Atlantic opinion appears divided about whether the big journal deals are to be protected at all costs or whether the time has come to tell publishers that some of these deals can no longer be afforded. Opinion also appears divided on how to calcu-

late the value of purchases, with some librarians using measures like cost per download and others looking for new measures of value that relate to the benefit to research and teaching within their institution. An additional factor is the extent to which changes in the way research is undertaken, disseminated and assessed will influence library decisions. Will the growing interest by researchers in new forms of scholarly communication combine with funding problems to produce change, or will a conservative approach to research assessment produce funds for libraries to maintain the status quo? Comments to lis-sconul on these issues will be welcome.

LAUNCH OF EUROPEANA

Europeana, Europe’s multimedia online library, was opened to the public recently, and soon the service had to be withdrawn ‘due to overwhelming interest after its launch’. It is a sign of the low expectations of authorities regarding the need for public access to books and journals not available locally that the service was not designed to receive the use it did receive. When the service is restored, at www.europeana.eu, internet users around the world will be able to access more than two million books, maps, recordings, photographs, archival documents, paintings and films from national libraries and cultural institutions of the EU’s 27 member states. Between 2009 and 2011, some €2 million per year of EU funding will be dedicated to the expansion of this service. The European Commission also plans to involve the private sector in the further expansion of Europe’s digital library. *Europeana* makes it possible to search and browse the digitised collections of Europe’s libraries, archives and museums all at once. This means users can explore themes without searching for and visiting multiple sites and resources. *Europeana* is run by the European Digital Library Foundation, which brings together Europe’s major associations of libraries, archives, museums, audiovisual archives and cultural institutions, and the service is hosted by the Dutch national library, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek. Over 1,000 cultural organisations from across Europe have provided material for *Europeana*.

FREE GLOBAL LIBRARY OF WOMEN’S MEDICINE

The Global Library of Women’s Medicine has been launched online and is freely available to all. Over 650 world experts have provided a definitive resource on the latest therapeutic options in women’s medicine for doctors and women concerned about their health. The library is free to view

at www.glowm.com and consists of 442 main chapters and 53 supplementary chapters, supported by over 40,000 references, which will be kept permanently up to date. The chapters have been written by more than 650 specialists and will reflect some of the very best world-wide opinion. *The Global Library of Women's Medicine* is primarily designed for the medical profession but most of the information will also be accessible by anyone else who wants to try and understand more about the therapeutic options available to women. In addition, there are innovative features freely available to registered users – aimed at medical professionals – including surgical videos, specialist colour atlases of visual medicine, comprehensive guidance to laboratory tests and the significance of their results and an option to provide doctors with selected patient-information handouts. As an open access resource it is hoped that in addition to providing an expert resource for the medical profession in the Western world, it may also be of real value to doctors and others in parts of the developing world, where getting access to current clinical information has always been challenging. All the expert authors and editors of the *Global Library of Women's Medicine* have made their contributions without any form of financial remuneration – and the British publishers have originated, developed and implemented the site entirely from their own funds – in order to support this significant global initiative.

PAYING FOR OPEN ACCESS PUBLICATION

A recent JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) survey of biomedical authors and universities sheds light on the way in which open access publication is currently supported in the UK. A high proportion of the authors surveyed are interested in publishing in full or hybrid open access journals, and are managing to find ways and means of paying OA publication charges, although with haphazard support from their institutions or funders. Many universities responding to the survey request claim to be dealing with the issue of OA publication charges, although in some cases with no clear policy or mechanism in place and with a varied allocation of responsibility for the issue within the institution. The report on the survey is available at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/aboutus/committees/workinggroups/scholarly-comms.aspx> under 'Documents and multimedia'. The JISC survey report will be included in the forthcoming report from the RIN (Research Information Network)/UUK (Universities UK) working group on OA publication charges, which will

make recommendations to all stakeholder groups on the issue.

ARL STUDY ON NEW MODEL PUBLICATIONS

A new Association of Research Libraries (ARL) study on *New model publications* looks across research fields and asks what new kinds of works researchers and scholars are using. The study involved two segments: the first phase – the field study – engaged librarian volunteers in arranging structured conversations with faculty members at their institutions to learn about new model publications that are currently in use by scholars and researchers, while the second phase consisted of interviews with selected managers of new model works and the preparation of a study report. ARL contracted with Ithaka to manage the field study and to write the final report, based on analysis of the collected works. The report provides a detailed picture of the patterns and trends that have emerged to date. The accompanying searchable collection offers 206 examples of new model works, along with descriptive information gathered for the study. Over 300 librarians participated in the field-study phase and interviewed hundreds of faculty members from across the disciplinary spectrum. They contributed records of more than 300 new kinds of scholarly works that are currently in use in a broad range of disciplines. The study is available at <http://www.arl.org/sc/models/model-pubs/pubstudy/index.shtml>.

GOOGLE AND PUBLISHERS SETTLE DISPUTE

The Authors Guild, the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and Google have announced a provisional settlement in their legal dispute over access to millions of in-copyright books from the collections of a number of major US libraries participating in Google Book Search. The agreement acknowledges the rights and interests of copyright owners, provides an efficient means for them to control how their intellectual property is accessed online and enables them to receive compensation for online access to their works. Compensation to authors and publishers will be provided through the creation of a book rights registry which will maintain accurate rights-holder information and enable rights holders to request inclusion in or exclusion from the project. The provisional agreement also includes arrangements for US universities to obtain subscriptions for online access to collections in libraries participating in Google Book Search, an application of the 'big deal' model to books rather than to journals. For this agreement Google will pay a

price of US\$125 million. Essentially the agreement reads as though Google have given in to publisher demands, perhaps considering that the price was worth paying in order to secure publisher support for Google Book Search. The problem with such short-term expediency is that there will be long-term consequences for the cost of access to the world's literature.

'GOOD NEWS' STORIES ON OPEN ACCESS

As open access to research publications becomes more prevalent, stories are beginning to be told of the benefits to research, teaching and learning of use of the open access model. One such story was told by Paula Callan at the recent 'Open access and research' conference in Brisbane. Paula described the experience of a chemistry researcher, Professor Ray Frost, who deposited 300 of his papers in the Queensland University of Technology repository and saw citations of his papers rise from around 300 citations in 2003 (the year before he made the repository deposits) to around 1,200 so far in 2008. Paula Callan and Alma Swan's presentation on 'OA: make it happen' (which contains some valuable advice on a range of repository issues) is available through <http://www.oar2008.qut.edu.au/program/>. Please send any similar 'good news' stories on open access to f.friend@ucl.ac.uk.

EUROPEAN COPYRIGHT MATTERS

The European Commission is now considering the responses submitted to its consultation on the copyright green paper. For many years the thinking of politicians and civil servants on copyright issues affecting academic users has been conditioned by constant and systematic lobbying by publishers, with only spasmodic input into the decision-making process from a handful of organisations pointing to the educational, social and economic value of strong exceptions to rights-holder control. The only really successful lobbying by the research community in recent years came in the form of the OA petition to the European Commission in 2007. However one sign of a possible change in the attitude of politicians came in the recent resolution by the EU Council entitled 'Council conclusions on the development of legal offers of online cultural and creative content and the prevention and combating of piracy in the digital environment'. The text of this resolution can be read at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/104198.pdf, but its significance lies in the order in which the ministers listed the

elements necessary to achieve a fair balance in copyright matters: 'The need to ensure a fair balance between the various fundamental rights, particularly the right to personal data protection, freedom of expression and information and the protection of intellectual property ...'. Is it reading too much into this wording to note that the protection of intellectual property now appears last in this list? Time will tell.

KEEP YOUR COPYRIGHTS!

A web-site set up by Columbia University illustrates the importance for academic authors of reading copyright contracts and not signing away all their rights. The web-site contains general information about copyright from a US perspective and sample clauses and contracts, 'some good some bad'. One particularly 'incredibly over-reaching' example of a contract is given at <http://keepyourcopyrights.org/contracts/clauses/example/60>, a contract which asked the supplier of content to a web-site to sign away moral rights (such as attribution) as well as all economic rights. How many UK academic authors know what they are signing every day?

AND FINALLY ...

... even the best people find it difficult to recognise an important development at first sight. In a presentation at the Berlin 6 Open Access conference, Paul Ginsparg of arXiv fame admitted his initial uncertainty about the world wide web development when he first heard of it. In an e-mail to a colleague at CERN on 13 November 1992, Paul wrote, 'I know nothing of www. What is it? Every other week someone tells me about some new wonderful network that I've never heard of but that will be the solution to everything.' Needless to say, Paul soon became enthusiastic about the WWW. His full presentation is at http://www.berlin6.org/?page_id=66.

Building for the Future



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The SCONUL buildings visit this year was to the south coast – to Bournemouth University to look at their prize-winning new build extension, and then on to Southampton University to see how an older building had been extended and adapted to current requirements.

At Bournemouth the extended and refurbished Library (<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/library/building/tsmc.html>) was opened in January 2003, and was the recipient of the SCONUL Library Design Award in 2007 (http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/space_planning/design_award/). Renamed the Sir Michael Cobham Library in 2007 in honour of the major donor to the project, the Library is an unusual design consisting of three linked octagons surrounding a courtyard with informal seating and a landmark sculpture, with a cafe adjacent to the Library.

The largest octagon is the new build extension, with four floors topped by a striking fibre optic sculpture marking what is now the tallest building on the campus, which stands out as a floodlit beacon at night.

The new build was Phase I of the development and houses the circulation desk and journals collection on the ground floor, with books organised by the Dewey sequence on the three floors above and with Special Collections on the top, 4th floor. Each of the floors has a variety of seating, with designated silent study on floors 2-4, and a group study and bookable syndicate room on the 2nd level. Phase 2 involved decanting the existing Library into the new space and then refurbishing the older library in the two smaller adjacent octagons. These spaces now house IT services, a Helpdesk and various self access learning facilities, on the ground floor, and the Language Centre, a Legal Practice Course Library and a postgraduate silent study area on the floor above. There

are 250 PCs in the Library, plus wireless and an 'insurance-based' approach to laptop support from the IT department, which students can buy into at different levels. The linked design between old and new, and the distribution of stock and technology, allows for the larger new building housing the collections to be closed off and secured whilst the IT and learning facilities remain accessible for extended hours.

The architects gave a presentation of the challenge presented by the extension and refurbishment project. The site is a difficult one set in the midst of the campus and constricted on all sides by other buildings and the need to maintain pedestrian access around the area. The original octagonal design of the existing Dorset House Library suggested that this shape should be echoed in the new build, and the brief's requirement to more than double the existing library floor area led to the need to build up to four floors. The budget was also constricted, to £5.3m, and there was a requirement to build an energy efficient building. An Arab 'wind tower' concept design was used to draw air into the base of the building and up and out at the top, with the plant room housed within the roof. The thermal mass of the building was used to assist with cooling, rather in the fashion of a cathedral. The average summer temperature in the building is 22 degrees centigrade, with louvre vents linked to the building management system achieving cooling. Windows are placed at the corner of the building, to make the most of natural light and also to provide the maximum area of wall space for shelving.

Jill Beard, Deputy Librarian, described how the building had fulfilled its brief and had proved adaptable over the years since it opened. Changes had been made to the stock and services in each year since the opening, with reduced shelving, more IT added – the latest 'Techno-booths' to allow IT assisted group work in an active learning environment. The rules on food and drink have been relaxed, with bottled water allowed throughout and cold food and drink on the ground floor. The Short Loan Collection has been dispersed into the main stock, and e-books and digitised readings provided instead.

The afternoon concluded with some workshops on various service and building aspects offered by Bournemouth, including self service provision, security and building management, designing technology-rich spaces, working in partnership with architects and furniture design.

In the evening Alan Short, architect of Coventry University Library and of the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), University of London – both SCONUL prize-winners – gave a fascinating talk on building design and energy efficiency. He also drew attention to the Arab wind tower concept as a means of circulating air to heat and cool buildings. Apart from libraries and HE buildings, Alan had worked mainly on art centres and theatres. These are often buildings which need some aspect of preservation because of their architectural merit and placing in townscapes, and also the owners frequently have limited budgets. Alan is an advocate for renovation of such buildings, rather than demolition. This saves money, and also allows the renovation to build in the energy features which lead to low running costs, using the thermal mass of the building and positive utilisation of the rapid build up of heat from audiences as auditoriums are occupied for performances.

The final half day was spent at Southampton University Library (<http://www.soton.ac.uk/library/about/hl/index.html>). Mark Brown, University Librarian, outlined the project to extend the Library at the rear of the building and renovate key parts of the existing space, which dates from 1935. The official opening had taken place in 2004, but the final completion was only in 2007, when Level 5 of the library was refurbished. The large collections held by Southampton had to accommodate some branch libraries which were being merged into the main library (one already absorbed and another to come in 2009), plus the challenge of re-spacing the collections to comply with the DDA, reducing shelving height from seven to six shelves and expanding aisle width from under 1m to more than 1m. The scattered periodicals collection was gathered together in one area, the bindery went off site, and a digitisation suite was added. Overall the project cost almost £13m, with 4,100 sq metres of new build and almost 9,000 sq m of refurbished space. The final result was the provision of 1,276 study places, 296 IT places, 21 bookable group study spaces, whilst retaining 33,493 metres of shelving and providing 7,101 metres of shelving for archives. The project had also provided some additional high quality exhibition space and a really lively internet cafe area adjacent to the library entrance.

Richard Wake followed on with reflections on lessons learned since the building was completed. The new building had permitted seven day opening to 12 midnight, and this and the variety of individual and group study space provided had

proved a great success. The improvements to the gallery and exhibitions space had improved access and visibility of Special Collections and archives. Whilst Southampton had not provided a dedicated research student area, the new periodicals area was a quiet area which attracted researchers and the building design, with a deep building profile, led to the study areas becoming quieter as you went further into the building. Not much extra shelving had been provided and assumptions about rates of acquisition and disposal were difficult predict back in the years when the design brief was being prepared. However, since then Southampton had moved to e-only journals, cancelling print subscriptions wherever possible, and was participating in UKRR to dispose of backruns. Overall, the rationalisation of stock and new shelving rearrangement had made books in demand easier to locate, and loans had risen by 10%. The project had allowed the redesign of the reception area, and as a result of assistants answering directional enquiries there, jobs had been enriched and some posts had been upgraded. Enquiry services elsewhere in the building had been reduced, with the closure of the Level 1 desk and concentration of enquiries on Level 3. The issue desk remains large, but with the introduction of self issue, staffing for assisted circulation has been able to be reduced.

Overall the SCONUL Building visit 2008 gave us a fascinating insight into two very different but equally successful library building projects. In both cases carefully thought out library briefs were executed by architects who worked closely with librarians to deliver quality designs making careful use of existing buildings and surroundings, adapting them cleverly to provide ample scope for library staff to adapt the space as user needs develop in the future.

Further details of papers presented at the Building Visit can be found at:
http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/space_planning/events

'Designing Libraries' – progress report on 2008



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INTRODUCTION

The labelling of public libraries as 'idea stores' and 'discovery centres' has been used as a means of highlighting to the general public the transformational nature of libraries and the information they contain, or to give access to collections and the buildings in which they are housed.

Librarians should need no reminding that this is the role and the justification for libraries. The challenge for librarians is in providing library buildings and library spaces which deal successfully with current patterns of information storage, learning and teaching, inspire their users and staff and demonstrate their impact to the institutions and purse-holders that fund them. They also need to design in flexibility which will facilitate accommodation to tomorrow's innovations.

SCONUL's long-term interest and expertise in academic library design is well known and has been exemplified through the activities of its working group on space planning; its library buildings database; its library building awards (now to be awarded every three years); and its building visits and publications. These activities reflect widespread SCONUL preoccupations.

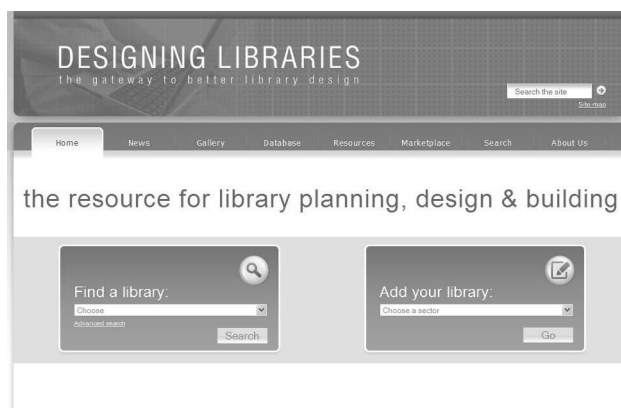
In SCONUL's top concerns survey of 2008, Chris West reports:

*'The clear top concern for both the last three months and over the next year is space and buildings. 93% of respondents rated this as either a high or a very high concern over the last three months and 94% rated it in the same way over the next twelve months.'*¹

BACKGROUND

'Designing Libraries', provided by a team based in information services at Aberystwyth University, was initiated in 2004 by MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) and CILIP as a resource for sharing best practice and experience in public library design.² It is a gateway to resources for library planning and design, comprising a database of descriptions and images of currently over 420 recent library-building projects, including conversions and refurbishments, image galleries and news on projects, events and publications, plus links to hundreds of information resources on all aspects of library planning and design. In summary, it acts as a resource and a forum for anyone with an interest in library planning and design.

2008 has been a year of major developments for Designing Libraries, with expansion of its database structure to accommodate records for buildings from all library sectors and countries; ongoing changes to the appearance of the site; and the addition of extra facilities and resources. Our new strap-line, 'Designing Libraries – the gateway to better library design', emphasises that our concerns are not restricted to library buildings but extend to all aspects of the design of library spaces.



Designing Libraries - home

SCONUL's decision to move its library-buildings data to the Designing Libraries platform reflected its commitment to the development and exploitation of that data. The SCONUL records became available via Designing Libraries in May 2008 and the Designing Libraries software has extended the usefulness of the existing SCONUL data. Records are now searchable by a wider range of criteria; the records can accommodate images; and there is direct access to the range of other facilities provided on the Designing Libraries site.

SCONUL shares with Designing Libraries the conviction that library design and planning concerns are not sector-specific. Not only is there

a large and growing interest in joint-use buildings, such as North City library in Manchester and the Worcester library and history centre project, but there are many design problems that are common across sectors.

CURRENT STATE

Since May 2008 the Designing Libraries database has been able to accommodate records for library building projects in public, higher education, further education and school libraries and national libraries, and from countries worldwide.

At the time of writing (December 2008) there are 420 records in the database (about 85% from the UK, plus 7% from the Republic of Ireland), with about 66% representing public libraries and 30% higher education libraries.

The image galleries contain almost 400 images and there are links to other galleries containing hundreds more images of library buildings.

More than 7,000 unique visitors used the site in November 2008.

The JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) LIBRARY-DESIGN e-mail list run by Designing Libraries currently has 350 subscribers and the number of subscribers has grown 30% in the last six months.

ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS

The extension of the database to accommodate records from other library sectors and the partnership with SCONUL were the first major developments of 2008.

The screenshot shows a detailed record for 'The Sir Michael Cobham Library'. The record includes metadata such as 'Originally added: 20th March 2008, 3:56pm' and 'Last revised: 20th November 2008, 10:15am'. It features a table of key information with fields like Sector (Higher Education), Parent institution (Bournemouth University), and Address (Fern Barrow, Poole, Dorset). A detailed description of the building is provided, mentioning its 4.5 kilometre shelving, special collections room, wireless networking, and blue-toothed points for access. The record also lists external features like art works, internal features like energy conservation, and services like group study spaces. A detailed description of the building's design and refurbishment is included, along with statistics such as 'Number of seats / study places: 1,970' and 'Number of public computer terminals: 255'. The record is awarded the 'SCONUL Library Design Award, 2007'. On the right side, there is a gallery of images showing the library's exterior and interior, including a 'Techno booth with interactive whiteboard and' and 'Study desks'. A copyright notice is also present: 'Copyright for these images rests with the library authority (unless otherwise stated) and is used with their permission. For permission to re-use these images please contact the library authority.'

Designing Libraries - record

A number of other major site developments are now in hand:

- A major restructuring of the site, from December 2008, provides an updated site structure and appearance and a number of new facilities, whilst maintaining the site's ease of use and navigability.
- The site will in future accommodate sponsorship and advertising; substantial thought has been given in the site to the need to:
 - balance the needs of users and advertisers
 - make clear distinctions in the site structure and on individual pages between information generated by Designing Libraries and that of commercial origin
 - ensure that the major concentration of the commercial information on the site will be in a new marketplace.
- The database will grow in size within both the public and higher education areas and also in coverage of libraries and learning resource centres in colleges of further education and in schools.

The screenshot shows the search interface of the Designing Libraries website. The header includes the site logo 'DESIGNING LIBRARIES the gateway to better library design' and a search bar. The main navigation menu includes Home, News, Gallery, Database, Resources, Marketplace, Search, and About Us. The search page has a 'Search help' section with instructions: 'Filter your search results by making selections from the selection boxes. By default, all values in a field are included within the search results unless you make a selection from the selection box for that field. No fields are mandatory, but you are required to choose at least one search parameter.' There are search filters for 'Building name' (The Sir Michael Cobham Library), 'Sector' (Further Education, Higher Education, National, Public, Schools), and 'Member organisation' (SCONUL). A tooltip for the Sector filter reads: 'Sector To search for records from all sectors leave blank. To search for specific sectors select all which apply.'

Designing Libraries - search

- We will also seek to ensure that existing records are augmented with images where they don't already contain them.
- The number of information sources available via the toolkit will be extended, both to ensure they cover all library sectors and also to strengthen coverage of materials on project planning, architecture and construction.
- We are aware of the need to help our users make maximum use of the data in our database records; we are therefore looking to develop:
 - more highlighting of best practice
 - more analysis of the library-buildings records to highlight content and identify trends.
 - the incorporation of analysis and comment on the site from librarians, architects and suppliers and other expert opinion.

SCONUL MEMBERS AND THE FUTURE

Please take advantage of the facilities which Designing Libraries offers and help us to develop them further:

- Check whether your institution already has a database record and take the opportunity to amend or update the record online, or by emailing us at info@designinglibraries.org.uk.
- Supply us with images to enhance that record.
- Add records to the database for in-progress or completed new builds, conversions or refurbishments at your institution.
- Use the database, the toolkit and the LIBRARY-DESIGN e-mail list to seek answers to your library-design queries.
- Tell us about information resources you have found helpful in your building-related projects.
- Visit the site regularly to keep up to date with design developments and sign up to our RSS feeds and newsletter.
- Send us your comments on the new site structure.
- Let us have your ideas on how you would like to see Designing Libraries develop and the sort of facilities you would see as helpful for your library planning and design needs.

To maximise the value of Designing Libraries we need SCONUL members, plus librarians from all sectors, together with architects, library designers

and suppliers, to use the portal as a resource and as a channel for sharing their experience of all aspects of the library planning and design process. Sheila Cannell, chair of the SCONUL working group on space planning, said of the 2007 winners of the SCONUL library building awards, 'We found that, while the winning libraries tended to score high across all the criteria, they were collectively highest in three criteria: fit to organizational mission; flexibility and innovation.' (p. 92)³

Designing Libraries is pleased to work with SCONUL and its working group on space planning in providing support services to help all SCONUL members deliver library spaces that achieve those goals.

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Adding value to the SCONUL Performance Portal

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The SCONUL Performance Portal¹ has been developed as part of a continuing commitment from SCONUL to providing a toolkit of data, measurement techniques, best-practice guidelines, case studies and other instruments to support members in demonstrating the value of their services to senior institutional stakeholders. The service has been in development since 2006 – overseen by the SCONUL working group on performance improvement – and was officially launched at the SCONUL conference in 2007.

The current functionality provides a set of tools, frameworks and methods, available via the 'Performance' tab on the SCONUL website. The content has been categorised using a broad set of themes, as follows:

- **Frameworks** – this section includes information, tools and methods relating to formal performance-improvement frameworks and models, such as the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) excellence model, and key performance indicators
- **Impact** – covers information about the SCONUL Impact Initiative, which ran between 2003 and 2005
- **Quality** – covers a range of resources and quality tools, including the LibQUAL+ survey instrument, other user survey tools and information on the Investors in People and Charter Mark frameworks
- **Statistics** – provides access to the SCONUL annual library statistics, the annual questionnaire, Higher Education Library Management Statistics (HELMS) and tools for trends analysis
- **Value** – this section is currently empty, and will contain advice and guidance on costing tools, value-for-money analysis and process-measurement methods.

Each topic area contains a definition of each of the tools, a description of the methodologies and a discussion forum to support access to best practice, sources of expertise and sharing of experiences. A key objective of the Performance Portal is to encourage the development of a community of practice around assessment and performance-measurement methods, through mutual engagement and the sharing of experience. In order to support this aim, the Performance Portal has been developed around a wiki concept, so that individual users can add their own content and contribute to the collaborative development of what is hoped will become a rich resource. The working group on performance improvement is particularly keen to encourage the submission of case studies and examples of good practice by institutions, and a set of content submission tools has been developed to support this aim. A workshop on the Performance Portal was held at the SCONUL conference in 2008. Attendees were asked about the key current issues for their institutions in relation to performance improvement, and they flagged a number of issues.

In particular, it was noted that library services are increasingly noting evidence of 'survey fatigue' amongst their users and amongst senior institutional stakeholders. This is partly a result of the increasing prominence of major institution-wide surveys such as the National Student Survey, which have, in some cases, led to restrictions on the number, timing and promotion of internal service-led surveys. However, there is a continued – indeed, increased – need for libraries to be able to obtain a customer perspective on the value of services and on user satisfaction. Hence, libraries are increasingly looking for other, perhaps more informal, approaches to gathering evidence data. Some institutions have focused on alternative methodologies such as the customer value discovery tool used by the Nottingham Trent University library, which focuses on two key aspects of service excellence:

- What services and facilities are of greatest value to users?
- What irritates them about existing services and resources?

Nottingham Trent University library has reported significant improvements in customer-satisfaction levels as a result of changes to forward-facing customer services introduced as a consequence of their analysis.²

Libraries are also keen to hear more about frameworks and methodologies such as the balanced scorecard³ and key performance indicators; in particular, it would be helpful to share advice on how to develop and apply these tools and examples of good practice from other institutions. It would also be useful to share advice and guidance on how to present data effectively to senior stakeholders, how to engage senior staff in discussions about service value and how to use the evidence to show whether increased investment in library services really does have an impact, for example in relation to institutional research performance.

The workshop attendees felt that the Performance Portal could play a crucial role in providing access to this kind and level of information, expertise and examples of good practice. Expertise from elsewhere should be drawn into the Performance Portal; this could include collaboration and links to similar work undertaken elsewhere, for example the MESUR (MEtrics from Scholarly Usage of Resources) project, which is exploring the use of usage-based metrics for assessing the impact of scholarly publications.⁴

The Performance Portal could also provide a one-stop-shop for major data sources such as the LibQUAL+ results workbook for the whole SCONUL cohort. Workshop attendees also felt it would be useful to provide real-life examples of how other institutions have successfully built business cases for additional resources, using evidence measures to support their case.

It was also suggested that efforts should be made to bring in evidence of good practice and innovation from outside the public sector. This might form the basis of a theme on 'next practice', focusing on innovation and the use of new tools to support performance measurement.

In order to encourage contributions, the workshop attendees felt that effective publicity is the key; this should focus on publicising success stories where data and evidence measures have been successfully used to build a case for extra resources or to protect the library budget. Quality control is a key issue, and it was recommended that editorial control is required for each content area to ensure that the quality of submissions remains high. An expertise database would also be useful, to assist the sharing of good practice within the community as a whole.

The next step for the Performance Portal will be to identify 'commissioning editors' for each section, who can start to work actively to build the content

and encourage contributions. It is hoped that this will start the process of building an active community of practice, which will sustain the Performance Portal as a rich and growing resource for the future.

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The National Student Survey: pain or gain?

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The National Student Survey (NSS) is an initiative of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that is aimed at providing students with an opportunity to make their views on their higher education experience count at a national level. The survey is targeted at final-year undergraduates in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and participating higher education institutions in Scotland. The NSS is now in its fourth year, with over 200,000 students having completed the survey, and access to the data is available through the Unistats website.¹

The NSS asks students to rate services at their university across the following areas:

- Overall satisfaction with the quality of the course
- The teaching on my course
- Assessment and feedback
- Academic support
- Organisation and management
- Learning resources
- Personal development
- Practice placements.

There is one question about library services in the survey; this appears in the 'Learning resources' section, and is phrased as follows:

'The library resources and services are good enough for my needs.'

In May 2008, the SCONUL working groups on performance improvement and quality assurance decided to jointly seek feedback from members on the value and impact of the survey in their institutions via the lis-sconul mailing list.² We were particularly interested in the following issues:

- What has been the impact on the library service of the NSS in institutions?
- How does the NSS fit into the overall assessment and performance framework within

institutions, and within the library service in particular?

- Do libraries actively compare their NSS results with results from their own library surveys and, if so, can any conclusions be drawn from this?
- Do librarians have any views on the wording of the library question, in terms of validity or relevance?
- Should SCONUL take a formal position on the NSS, or seek to influence the wording of the library question?

A total of 33 institutions responded to the request for feedback.

IMPACT

Of the institutions who responded to this question 22 indicated that the NSS has had a positive impact on the library in their institution.

There is evidence from the responses that the NSS is taken very seriously by many institutions, with close involvement at the highest levels in reviewing the results and leading on the formulation of action plans. Institution-wide action plans appear to be common, with these often being monitored and reviewed at the senior executive level. The library is often seen as a critical player in this activity. For example:

'It prompted a whole series of investigations based on the quality of the student experience. Past and present students were surveyed to analyse their perceptions of being a student at this institution, what they liked, what could be improved (the library was high on the list!) and prompted a number of discussions and action plans to ensure that the university retains its high ranking.'

Where the library has scored well in the NSS, this has generally been acknowledged in the wider institution, leading to improvements in the internal profile and reputation of the library:

'We have been able to use the scores in our service development plan, presentations to users etc to demonstrate good performance, particularly in relation to other areas and thus to justify funding levels internally.'

Some institutions responded that the library scores were seen as 'pulling up' the overall scores within the institution, as the library had tended to perform relatively better than other aspects such as teaching and assessment. This has been seen as

being beneficial to the institution as a whole, and the library has been commended as a result:

'The university does review the outcomes very carefully but from a library perspective they have been happy to note that the library scores very well and used this in some publicity.'

'The results of the NSS for the library were good; we publicised the results internally to staff (good for morale); the institution has used the results more generally in marketing.'

Where the library has scored poorly, librarians seem to have been able to turn this to their advantage. Libraries have been able to use poor scores to make successful bids for additional resources and facilities:

'Significant financial investment: virtually all one-off project budget bids have been successful to the tune of over £500k in 2 years.'

'The NSS results led to a significant increase in core resources budget.'

Libraries have also used the results to drive forward improvements in communication and liaison with academic departments:

'We have used it to target areas and priorities for development and in particular to focus the activities of subject librarians and liaison staff. It is a helpful tool to work on enhancement at subject level and has helped to maintain our input into academic quality assurance within the university after the disappearance of external academic/subject review. It also ensures that library enhancement is included in subject enhancement plans – an internal study of good practice from the NSS showed that successful subjects tended to have strong links with subject librarians.'

Of the institutions who reported no significant impact from the NSS, a number of reasons were given for this:

'Within the university the focus of the results tends to be on the faculties and how they are affected rather than on support areas.'

'The library has come out reasonably well each year so we aren't considered a "problem".'

'[It is] not very easy to assess the effect on the library itself as distinct from the impact of the NSS on the whole university.'

RELATIONSHIP WITH OVERALL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

Of the institutions that responded 27 indicated that the NSS does now form part of the overall assessment and performance framework of the institution and/or the library.

Within the library, the NSS is used as part of annual satisfaction monitoring at the course and discipline level, as part of annual quality reviews and strategic planning and as a key performance indicator. Some libraries have also undertaken benchmarking to rank their scores against those of other institutions in order to produce their own internal league tables. Where libraries reported having developed an assessment framework, the NSS was seen as a key element of this, alongside user surveys, focus groups, module questionnaires, suggestions schemes and other service-review measures. In most cases, libraries have been able to maintain their own, more detailed, user surveys alongside the NSS, although a few institutions did report difficulties with this:

'The biggest impact in real terms has been the dominance of the NSS, and our internal version of it for first and second year [students], which now mean that we have had to virtually abandon any surveys of our own. [There is] no chance of LibQual etc so we now use Focus Groups etc.'

At the institutional level, the NSS is generally being used as one of several means to assess overall performance, alongside other tools such as Quality Assurance Agency audits, internal student satisfaction surveys and university-level KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER SURVEY RESULTS

Of the institutions that responded 14 had actively compared their NSS results with the results from other library or institutional surveys. Many found that the results were broadly similar, although internal surveys provide the opportunity to ask more detailed and wide-ranging questions, and so give more detail and insight into concerns. The general nature of the NSS question tends not to permit much in the way of granularity of analysis:

'The question can only serve as a verification of satisfaction arising from other customer feedback mechanisms as it is so generic.'

'I have looked at some of the survey results and they appear to reflect the outcomes locally but it is difficult to draw firm comparisons because of differing

scoring methods and different levels of disaggregation.'

Internal surveys also tend to cover the entire user population, not just final-year undergraduates. One library noted an interesting finding in relation to this:

'The results more or less back up our findings but [we] note that NSS is final year students only – this does impact on responses as generally surveys show reducing satisfaction as time at University goes on!'

A number of other libraries noted that their NSS scores tended to be lower than the scores received from other feedback mechanisms:

'We conduct our own detailed surveys of library IT and media services, with questions relating to all aspects of our services. This provides us with a much more meaningful response that helps us to identify the areas of our services that we need to change and improve. The scores are always more positive.'

'NSS scores are generally lower than our surveys on services quality.'

'We have compared the NSS results with those of the other institutional surveys (which are carried out for first and second year students) and our own library survey in 2007. The issues reported in the open responses are very similar, but the rating scores from NSS are consistently lower than some of our other surveys which use satisfaction scales. I think this results from the poor form of the NSS question, which invites people to think of adequacy rather than degrees of quality.'

'We haven't done surveys of user satisfaction for a year or so, but the latest available NSS results, and the university's own mock [surveys] more recently, are markedly worse than previous surveys. It could be that the lowish response rates to the NSS indicate that respondents only respond if they have a complaint and that satisfied students are not motivated to report satisfaction. But earlier surveys were not well responded to either, and library etc came out reasonably well.'

VIEWS ON THE LIBRARY QUESTION

Views on the question used in the NSS were quite mixed, with no clear consensus emerging from the institutions that responded.

Libraries flagged the following concerns about the question:

- It does not focus on the electronic aspects of the library service, which play an increasing part in overall service provision.
- The phrase 'good enough for my needs' appears to encourage a negative response.
- The question does not allow respondents to focus their response on satisfaction with either stock or services.

The question is linked with others also • included under 'Learning resources' – most significantly, a question about access to specialised IT resources – which may skew the overall result for the 'Learning resources' section as specialised facilities may not, by their nature, be widely available to all.

- It does not focus on the level of support for learning provided by the library service.

'It seems to me that the wording of the library question plays into strong student feelings about what they're worth and what they're entitled to as paying customers – it's aspirational, requires no discrimination of what is needed from what is wanted, and in particular stumbles over multiple competitive access to printed content and an array of academic approaches to required reading. The IT question is more focused on need – and in general (beyond specialist IT kit), wireless networking and desktop PC supply are well established on campuses. It's what's on them however that's critical.'

The overall feeling was that the library question is too general, but respondents felt that it would be difficult to come up with a more specific wording that could contain sufficient detail in a single question. There were also concerns that if attempts were made to widen the survey by introducing more questions, this would reduce response rates because students would be put off by a longer questionnaire. The importance of being able to map trends across a number of years was also flagged.

Respondents suggested that SCONUL might be able to usefully provide input to the NSS in the following ways:

- in influencing the positioning of the library question, so that it is not bundled with questions on access to specialised equipment and facilities
- proposing an improved wording which would separate out views on resources and services (it was suggested that the following

rewording might be appropriate: 'The library print and electronic resources supported my studies' and 'The library services supported my studies')

- proposing a set of supplementary questions which could be sent to a smaller sample of institutions.

However, other respondents expressed concerns about potential SCONUL input to the NSS, flagging concerns about recent media controversy about the survey³ and the potential difficulty in coming up with anything that would provide more than a fairly crude measure of satisfaction.

Overall, the responses appear to indicate that most respondents see the NSS as generally useful in providing an impetus for change within institutions. However, as a tool for gathering evidence for improvement, it still has to prove itself completely as a stable and reliable measure. The results need to be supplemented by more detailed survey tools such as the SCONUL survey or LibQUAL+ or other valid and reliable survey instruments in order to obtain a complex and detailed picture of satisfaction and an agenda for improvement. The SCONUL working groups would like to thank those who responded to the survey. The SCONUL position on the NSS is under active consideration by the working group on performance improvement and the working group on quality assurance. If members have further views please could these be sent to the chair of either working group.⁴

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SCONUL Canadian study tour

27 September – 11 October 2008

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(Written in collaboration with all members of the Canadian study tour; please see a full list of names at the end of this item.)



SCONUL Study Group members

INTRODUCTION

Sixteen directors and senior managers of libraries and information services from the UK and Ireland participated in SCONUL's study tour to Canada and the USA. This tour was the latest in a series organised as part of SCONUL's international strategy; previous study tours have included visits to Australia, New York and South Africa.

The Canadian visit was hosted by the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and was an opportunity to follow up on many of the interesting initiatives described by CARL members on their tour of UK libraries in 2007.¹

Trying to cover a country the size of Canada in two weeks is an impossible task but from three main bases in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa the programme provided a variety of opportunities to learn from and exchange experiences with the local hosts. The Canadian programme included visits to public and academic libraries plus the Library of Parliament and the Libraries and Archives Canada Preservation Centre, which

is part of Canada's National Library. In addition, the tour managed to include a short stopover in Seattle to see the award-winning Seattle public library and visit the Microsoft corporate campus in Redmond, WA.

As might be imagined, a tour of this scope covered a very wide range of topics. However, for the purpose of this report the group agreed to highlight some of the issues which we felt are most relevant to colleagues in the UK.

SPACE PLANNING

Tour participants were particularly interested in how the various libraries we visited had developed flexible and inclusive spaces, and we witnessed a wide range of innovative and traditional approaches, not least in the specialist and public libraries visited.

University of British Columbia

One of the many impressive facilities visited on the tour was the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at the University of British Columbia.² The centre was opened in two phases, in 2005 and 2008, with the stated aim of being an exemplar of how undergraduate education can be supported in North America. The centre is very open, with entry points at all corners of the building and no access controls in these areas. It has 1,500 seats and is one of 10 libraries within the university. The various branch libraries have yet to be refurbished and developed along the same lines as the K. Barber Learning Centre.

The learning centre provides high-quality and flexible study space, which is clearly very popular with students. In order to provide the space needed for flexible study areas the stock has been pushed into the centre of the building, with access and security controls at that point. A vast robotic store facility currently holds approximately 750,000 items and has a capacity of 1.6 million (out of a total stock of 5 million).³ The robotic book-retrieval system handles 100 requests per day, which are submitted via the catalogue and are delivered to a collection point in the centre within a few minutes. The centre contains digital screens which carry images and information about less-visible stock. In addition to library support, the centre also houses partners such as the office for learning technology, the office for academic development and the university's library school. This approach to the collaborative sharing of space was common to many of the academic libraries visited on the tour, with typical

examples being a learning or information commons approach (for example at the Universities of Ryerson and Simon Fraser).



A UBC student makes good use of flexible seating

In order to provide easy access to the range of services contained in the centre, a new 'welcome team' has been created which provides signposting to the various services available. This team is staffed by students providing peer-assisted help under the banner of 'Here comes everybody.' Good referral skills are seen as essential when appointing students to these roles.

Seattle public library

Visits to major public libraries were very instructive, none more so that the visit to Seattle public library, an iconic building in the heart of downtown Seattle which opened in May 2004. This \$165m, 28,275m² library (including 4,550m² for car parking) is the third public library on the site, and was designed by Rem Koolhaas and Joshua Ramus of the office for metropolitan architecture in the Netherlands and LMN Architects in Seattle. The building's vast open spaces and cantilevered platforms were made possible through the innovative use of vertical and sloped columns, trusses and a steel diamond-shaped glazed outer grid. The architects provided space for more computers, more books, more cars and more events in an innovative design that kept costs down and earthquake resistance up. With almost 10,000 panes of glass, the library is not only transparent but also energy-efficient.

Built on a sloping site, the library has in effect two entrances, although the lowest level was considered the main entrance – it certainly made a political statement, housing on one side the children's library and on the other materials for speakers of English as a second language, constituencies the library is keen to engage with. The carved maple floor by Ann Hamilton, featuring words

from eleven language scripts, reinforced the point that the library was dealing with a multi-cultural, multi-lingual community and that learning a language is difficult. However, the entrance was anything but grand, and the space felt very much like a basement area. It needed an escalator ride – with fluorescent yellow as a design feature ('chartreuse' in design-speak) – to the next level to appreciate the style of the building and its layout from the inside. This was indeed a soaring, open space, confined by the distinctive totally glazed external walls, broken by the solid block of accommodation on the upper levels, the most notable features of which were the meeting-room floor with its blood-red corridor leading to discussion rooms (red supposedly stirring the imagination prior to discussion) and the book spiral, accommodating the non-fiction stock on a continuous ramp over four floors. Staff working on service points in the library were enthusiastic about its success and about its appeal to library patrons.



Seattle public library

Gatineau Preservation Centre

The first day of the visit to Ottawa was also without a doubt a day of visits to quality buildings, including the Gatineau Preservation Centre of the Libraries and Archives Canada (LAC) just over the border in Quebec and the Library of Parliament building in Ottawa city centre.

The preservation centre consists of three floors of concrete storage vaults, plus a floor for staff working on preservation and digitisation, surrounded by a glass-and-metal outer building which protects the concrete from fluctuations in temperature and humidity. All the plant is situated in an adjacent building, allowing for easy maintenance and reducing the risk of disaster to materials held in the vaults. Although it is 11 years old and at Canadian \$89m didn't come cheap, it looks brand-new and we were impressed with the attention to

detail that had obviously gone into the original design.

The group was shown a range of projects being undertaken by some of the 80 staff who work on the top floor. The floor is laid out like a town and even has street signs and a 'town hall' meeting space. Because all the services enter the building immediately below this floor, it is easy to redesign the layout of offices and labs and they are constructed largely from corrugated metal with different roof styles reflecting the design of barns on the prairies, the home of the architect. Making material available on the internet is a big driver for a lot of the projects demonstrated on the day, such as digitising microfilm reels, books and other artefacts and the Canadian version of the TV programme *Who do you think you are?* has increased the demand for genealogical materials to be made available on the web.

The group was also taken through the rigorous security process to see inside some of the concrete vaults. There are 45 vaults and each one is 350m² and has its own temperature, humidity and sprinkler controls. Compact shelving is installed in some vaults; this is manual, because with electrically operated shelving there would be a risk of sparks. Lighting is operated by movement sensors. There is a disaster cart on each of the three floors. The building is designed to ensure that in the event of a fire, the water released by the sprinklers drains out of the vault and out of the building as quickly as possible by gravity, and smoke would be removed through the air-filtration process. Over 3,000 oil paintings dating from as early as 1689 are stored in a specially designed vertical-storage system. Paintings are held in the collection for their depiction of matters of relevance to Canada, not on the basis of their artistic merit.

Library of Parliament building

On their return to Ottawa the group were given a tour of the Parliament building before a more detailed tour, discussion and reception at the Library of Parliament. The main role of the library is to provide information to parliamentarians and this role is being extended to provide research and analysis, rather than just information. The move from being reference librarians to researchers and analysts inevitably means that staff are developing increasing subject specialisms and this has implications for succession planning. Many of the services of the library reflect those of a special library; for example the traditional current awareness service is still very popular. The library also has a role to provide general

information about Parliament and so is responsible for publications, the web site and even the tour guides and outreach programmes to schools. As well as the splendid library within the Parliament, the service operates from a range of other sites, some of which are open to the public, and there is also a large off-site store. The library is moving from being reactive to actually setting the research agenda, telling MPs and their staff what the upcoming issues are.

Although the library escaped a major fire in 1916 there was a fire in the library dome in 1952 that resulted in a lot of water damage. In 2002 the library closed for four years for renovation. The attention to detail of the refurbishment was remarkable; the wood panelling, the quality of the furniture, the glass floors in the balconies, the dark green, purple and gold railings and the bronze in every window frame to control humidity did not come cheap, but the result was fantastic! In the stacks we were lucky enough to see Audubon's *Birds of America* and a small exhibition of archives marking the city of Quebec's 400th anniversary.

Microsoft workplace lab solutions

The group observed a slightly different approach to space-planning at the Microsoft campus just outside Seattle. Here, in its workplace lab, Microsoft examines how work space can be designed to support functional requirements and to support collaboration, encourage community and encourage innovation. In essence the workplace lab contains mock-ups of offices and meeting rooms which use furniture design, textures and mobile equipment to test different ways of working. At their most simplistic, the spaces observed provide teams with the ability to work in a pleasant environment, using a mix of furniture to encourage group and individual work and allowing people to make a drink next to their work desk. Flexible furniture means that the configuration of a room can be changed to suit changing work patterns. This visit was a reminder that flexible space planning needs to include staff space as well as areas designed for students. However, it was interesting to observe the very traditional nature of many of the offices on the campus, which did not necessarily reflect the laboratory environment.



Workplace lab, Microsoft

VALUES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Several of the Canadian libraries visited on the tour have carried out work to explore issues relating to value-based service models and outreach activities. Although much of this work needs to be seen in the local context (48% of Canadian residents have a first language other than English or French) a number of topics under discussion have direct relevance to UK academic libraries, including those concerning values, access models and the impact of rules and regulations on perceptions of service models. In Vancouver public library Sandra Singh, national director of the 'Working Together' project, described a four-year study into the application of community development techniques aimed at creating more inclusive public library services. At the core of this work was an exploration of service values and their impact on excluded groups. The work carried out at Vancouver has resulted in the 'Community-led libraries toolkit' report, which includes guidelines on staff training and managing change that are of direct relevance to all libraries.⁴

One very interesting aspect of the tour was the pervasiveness of discussions about the impact of space controls, rules and notices on service-users. At Vancouver public library considerable care has been taken to remove notices that tell patrons what they are not allowed to do and staff have been given clear guidelines on flexibility regarding the use of sanctions such as fines. This approach is not confined to public libraries. At the Irving K. Barber learning centre at the University of British Columbia a decision has been taken to remove any signs and notices telling students to be silent. Instead, the design of different zones has been used to signal the sorts of behaviours that are encouraged throughout the building. Those intended for silent study have been designed in a more 'traditional' way than areas provided for

group and collaborative working. During our tour of the centre complete silence was being observed by students using the silent study zones.

It is apparent that engagement with the local community is a topic of interest both to the Vancouver public library and to the nearby University of British Columbia, where consideration is being given to providing a branch library outlet for the public library. The Irving K. Barber learning centre is a truly inspirational building which the university sees as a potential outreach tool: a place where you can be welcome to drop in as a community space, meet people, check e-mails, have a coffee (alumni, community as well as students/staff) and see public art events. Interestingly, at the time of our visit UBC had just employed Sandra Singh from Victoria public library as its new learning centre director, seeing this appointment as an opportunity to bring skills relating to community outreach into an academic environment.

Collaboration between public and academic libraries was not only evident in British Columbia. For example, at the University of Ottawa the group received a very interesting presentation from Mary Cavanagh, the co-ordinator of Sm@rtLibrary, a collaborative venture in the Ontario region. Sm@rtLibrary grew from a partnership of five libraries (Canada Institute for Science and Technical Information, Library and Archives Canada, the Universities of Carleton and Ottawa and Ottawa public library) funded as a pilot project between 2001 and 2003 by the federal government with the aim of extending access to library services for residents of the national capital region. The region has a population of 1.2m and covers the city of Ottawa and ville de Gatineau in Quebec, so everything is bilingual. Membership has grown to include two national museums, the national art gallery, a government library and further post-secondary institutions. As well as providing a single-search capability based on Z39.50, a membership card is available allowing individuals to borrow from the participating libraries.⁵

INFORMATION LITERACY

Information literacy (IL) was a topic of considerable interest to the academic librarians we met and we received a very informative presentation on this topic at Toronto's York University, by Lisa Sloniowski, the York IL programme co-ordinator. York has developed core graduate skills and has mapped IL skills onto this matrix. Practice in the libraries we visited was for IL to be delivered

mainly by library staff and we observed a greater emphasis on systematic measurement at York, and on co-development with faculty staff, than is currently evident within the UK. On a macro level there is clearly a move across many of the universities we visited to co-locate related skills-based activities, for example in writing centres or learning technology departments within the same physical space as the university library.

A key feature of IL in Canada, and to a similar extent in the UK, is that it clearly offers individual LIS (Library and Information Service) staff a legitimate reason to build connections with colleagues from the faculties and provides a rationale for the development of a range of L&T skills – the acquisition of these skills being often backed by an academic qualification. For example the M.Ed. is more evident in Canada than the UK. Student peer support for ‘academic’ literacies is a common approach to supporting academic achievement; this is in place in some institutions across the UK, but perhaps there are lessons that can be learnt from Canadian colleagues, and a possible extension into some IL areas.

Colleagues in Canada referred to issues regarding workforce development and succession planning for the LIS profession – many of which will be familiar to SCONUL members. One was related to recruitment and the ‘readiness’ of graduates to enter the profession with the right suite of skills; the second clearly relates to CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and the level of input required by employers. CARL held a recent meeting with directors of university library schools to discuss these issues. An action plan was agreed that includes a national marketing campaign aimed at attracting more graduates to the profession. This approach might be transferable to the UK.

DIGITAL CONTENT AND SERVICES

Context

Mass education in Canada, with universities hosting upward of 40,000 students and a commitment to international research excellence, is driving a strong emphasis on digital library developments. In contrast to the UK, however – where there is a national body, the Joint Information Steering Committee (JISC), funded to develop the digital infrastructure – Canada relies on a patchwork of national, regional and consortia arrangements. As a result there is a degree of collaborative practice that goes beyond what is available in the UK, but in some areas the lack of a national framework

means that priorities and investment can be variable.

Canadian universities are involved in international projects, particularly those associated with digitisation programmes; for example the University of Toronto is engaged in the collaborative work of mass digitisation funded from the Internet Archive in the US. At the same time there is a strong commitment to collaboration at the level of the province, and a national commitment to funding the digitisation of Canadiana material as part of a programme to ensure a full historical record of Canadian culture.

Collaborative search and discovery

The study group observed many examples of collaborative working which have resonance with the UK, not least in the development of integrated digital and print services using search and discovery tools. The Scholars Portal Service, located at the University of Toronto and funded collaboratively for universities within Ontario, provided us with the most comprehensive example of the challenges of integrating licensed and unlicensed material, document delivery and end-user functions for collaborative use.⁶ Scholars Portal provides a model for relating a number of centrally provided services accessible through locally configured systems with a range of collaborative services such as collaborative document delivery. It was clear that discussions had taken place about the feasibility of collective procurement for Ontario of a fully collaborative library management system, but both timing and local funding arrangements had clearly been too diverse to achieve full integration. Scholars Portal is, however, providing a central resource-discovery service which aims to integrate journal access, database access, digital content and catalogue descriptions for print material in one place, allowing local users to benefit from the collective data management. Discovery is a central service, but access is defined locally. Access to licensed material would depend on local library licence agreements, and libraries opt in to any agreements negotiated with publishers.

Scholars Portal has developed some innovative approaches to providing added value. A significant number of databases have been loaded locally to allow more effective integrated single-interface cross-searching, although access to the resulting ‘hits’ can then only be accessed and authenticated locally. This approach produces a certain level of intelligent searching, and users are still given options to select the aggregator through

which they wish to access journal material locally. Authentication is based on a collaborative shibboleth architecture and the libraries have created a document delivery service, RACER, to allow document delivery to be serviced more quickly on a collaborative basis. Digital content that is being created by the Internet Archive project at the University of Toronto, together with access to Canadian and other international digitisation projects, is increasingly being integrated into the core database. There was also a major e-books initiative at Toronto to add bibliographic records to the database for material held there.

Scholars Portal does not substitute for an integrated collaborative system because libraries operate local systems, local software and local library management systems to access the interface, and their access rights are controlled by subscription profiles and their local authentication. In terms of current interest in the UK in developing library management systems there are some interesting lessons. Firstly it is clearly very difficult to achieve a collective procurement of library management systems because of the variations of timing, cost and functional requirements. Secondly the real benefit of the portal approach can only be achieved if there is one central source of expertise and commitment by the collaborative group to paying for this unit. Thirdly – and this appeared in the course of discussions with individuals both at Toronto and in other libraries – there is concern about ensuring that the agenda at the University of Toronto is serving the needs of the wider community in development terms. It was unclear from our visit whether the interlinking between Scholars Portal and virtual learning environments was any more developed, and it was also unclear as to the extent to which style applications were priorities. In conclusion, Scholars Portal offers an impressive way of drawing together collaborations between libraries seeking value from a collective approach to resource discovery and delivery, but falls short of an integrated collaborative system.

DIGITAL LIBRARIES

Given the high degree of collaborative work represented by the Scholars Portal in Ontario, we were also interested to see the extent to which the libraries we visited were developing digital initiatives. It is clear that new roles are emerging in the area of digital initiatives, including emerging technologies, with more dedicated staff (not necessarily librarians). Web 2.0 developments were identified as significant in terms of engaging

users, and there was a commitment to responding to digital innovation and curriculum integration. Most of the libraries we visited were using open-source software as a means of introducing innovation. For example, LibX, an open-source development from Virginia Tech University, was being used at York University in Toronto as a plug-in for web browsers to provide direct access to library electronic resources. LibX is one of a growing range of ‘gizmos’ and plug-ins that have the potential to improve significantly access to a library’s electronic resources at the point of need, wherever that might be (Facebook etc.). For some universities in the UK the consideration of LibX and similar might prompt a review of their resource-discovery strategies. York is also using Open Journals Systems (OJS, developed by Simon Fraser University) as an online platform for scholarly online journals. OJS is a journal-management and publishing system which has been adopted widely as an online publishing platform by hundreds of scholarly online journals.⁷

In terms of digitisation it would appear that Canada has a clearer view of the central role of the national library and archives for digitising cultural and historical materials, and for linking digitisation to the national preservation strategy. In pursuing an active programme of creating digital content, the emphasis has been on access, but there is recognition of the need for sustainability based upon a mixed economy of national investment, not-for-profit sponsorship (such as Internet Archive) and commercial hosting. There is also an awareness of the vulnerabilities of these sustainability strategies. The overall impression, however, was that they have a more joined-up strategy for digitisation, clearly absent in the UK. The current reviews of future digitisation strategy being carried out by JISC and by Research Libraries UK (RLUK) could be relevant to developing a clearer UK strategy and in this context the Canadian example of digitisation, preservation and access, together with the mixed mode of sustainability, could be useful.

There is important groundwork being done in Canada at a national collaborative level to create a national strategy for the preservation, management and sharing of research data. As in the UK, this is at the level of scoping issues and potential models. There appeared to be more join-up between the National Science Foundation, the research councils and the universities than is perhaps yet the case in the UK.

CONCLUSION

The study tour provided a real opportunity to build on relationships that had started to develop during CARL's UK tour in 2007 and to identify topics of joint interest between SCOUNL and CARL, building on SCOUNL's international strategy and meeting the strategic aim to establish international partnerships and collaborations. It is hoped that this report provides an indication of areas of possible joint working and also areas of good practice that might inform developments in the UK.

Thanks are given to all our Canadian hosts who were unstinting in their hospitality and willingness to share information. A report of this nature cannot do justice to everything we learned and enjoyed on the visit and readers are encouraged to visit the web sites of all the places visited. One very positive side-effect of participating in a SCOUNL international visit is the opportunity to network with a group of colleagues from the UK. My personal thanks therefore go to everyone on the tour for their very active contribution to planning, participating and writing accounts of the various visits, for their consistent good humour and intelligent conversation and for their astonishing stamina!

Tour participants:

Mike Berrington, Nottingham Trent University; Mark Brown, University of Southampton; Emma Bull, Queen Mary's University of London; Sue Clegg, Roehampton University; Philip Cohen, Dublin Institute of Technology; Jane Core, Northumbria University; Helen Durndell, Glasgow University; Suzanne Enright, University of Westminster; John Hall, Durham University; Alison Mackenzie, Edge Hill University; Maxine Melling, Liverpool John Moores University; Mary Nixon, Goldsmiths University of London; Gill Needham, Open University; Kate Robinson, University of Bath; Karen Senior, University of Bolton; Helen Workman, Oxford Brookes University.

Places visited (in chronological order):

Vancouver Public Library: <http://www.vpl.ca/>
Simon Fraser University Library: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/>
University of British Columbia Library: <http://www.library.ubc.ca/>
Seattle Public Library: <http://www.spl.lib.wa.us/>
Microsoft Campus Seattle: <http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/gallery/campus.msp>

University of Toronto Library Service: <http://main.library.utoronto.ca/>
York University Library Service: <http://www.library.yorku.ca/>
Ryerson University Library Service: <http://www.ryerson.ca/library/>
Library and Archives Canada: http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/preservation/1302_e.html
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- 6 See <http://www.scholarsportal.info/>
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New opportunities for strategic engagement

SCONUL Autumn Conference

British Library, 16 December 2008

Reviewed by

Antony Brewerton

SCONUL *Focus* Editorial Board

I hate having to start my review like this but I must question the name of this conference. Not the 'New opportunities for strategic engagement' bit – we were offered lots of opportunities and heard lots about strategy during the day. No, what I am less sure about is SCONUL's grasp of the concept of seasons, with the Autumn Conference now falling in mid-winter ...just as the Spring Conference now appears in June. This aside, this was an inspiring day and organisers Julia Munro and Robin Green should be commended for putting together an excellent programme.

After a welcome from Jane Core, SCONUL Chair, **Karla Hahn** gave an overview of developments in the US and Canada with her paper 'Libraries as publishers'. Karla began by reviewing the results of a recent survey by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) of its 123 members to see how widespread the practice of libraries offering publishing services was. With 65% of the membership responding, 44% said they were offering such services, 21% were planning to and only 35% were not interested. As she says, it is a "pretty standard function" of academic libraries on the other side of the Pond. Librarians view this very much as a service, usually responding to pleas from academic colleagues who have got involved with journals and then find they need help from institutions more closely linked to the world of publishing. Karla finished by quoting case studies including the UC Pubs project based at the University of California which saw the university's institutional repository (IR) re-launched to include the hosting and archiving of articles, the publishing of journals, monographs and conference proceedings, alongside marketing and copy editing services.

For Karla, "the question is no longer whether libraries should offer publishing services ...but what kind of services?". One kind of service is that offered by the Library at the University of Northampton. **Miggie Pickton** gave us a very interesting review of the Northampton Open Journals Project which aims to augment Northampton's IR by providing Northampton journals which can promote research by Northampton academics and colleagues from outside the university. After giving the strategic context, Miggy gave a useful overview of some of the practicalities concerned with setting up a journal (software selection, how academics can apply to establish a journal, how journals can support the ambitions of the university rather than merely the individual academic, the extent of the authority of editorial boards, style and group identity of university journals, sponsorship rules and marketing considerations) which would be of use to any librarian thinking of stretching their library's brand.

Moving on from libraries as publishers, the next speaker up was **Michael Jubb** from the Research Information Network. Michael is always an engaging speaker and (because it was nearly Christmas ...or because it was the day before the Research Assessment Exercise results were to be released) he was the bearer of good tidings with various reports on how reading journal articles is linked to research excellence. Quoting US studies, he showed how the consumption of journal articles has increased significantly since 1990. Researchers said they felt reading improved their research, with 55.2% saying it inspired ideas, 41% saying it enhanced the quality of their research and 26% asserting that it narrowed the focus of their work. Generally, researchers are reading more, citing more and citing from a wider range of resources than they were doing 18 years ago. Michael ended with an overview of the scholarly communications process, outlining the costs at each stage. Whilst the publishing and access to publishing elements (the bits we focus on as librarians) cost £8.5 billion worldwide per year, the cost of staff time involved (or, in some cases, wasted?) in searching for information, browsing, downloading and printing comes in at a massive £16.4 billion. Seems like an opportunity for us there!

More details about recent activities and projects conducted by the RIN appear elsewhere in this issue of *Focus*.

Michael was followed by **Debby Shorley** and **Jean Sykes** updating us on two important

research initiatives. Debby started by focusing on the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) which has now completed phase one. This phase worked well, with unique materials being added to the British Library and over 11km of shelving being released in partner institutions. Some things still need more work: tighter guidelines on what can be deposited in the BL (who would prefer to secure longer runs of titles); a database of materials in the scheme and (linked to this) an improvement in the metadata librarians provide. Phase two will start early in 2009 when Frances Boyle joins as UKRR Manager. Colleagues were invited to a celebration (and opportunity to sign up to the scheme) at the Royal Geographical Society on 19 February.

Jean followed Debby's lively talk with a similarly positive review of the UK Research Data Service feasibility study, which is concerned partly with archiving (and making accessible) research data. But as Jean was at pains to point out, it is really about the whole data lifecycle and working with researchers to bring about a sea change to ensure data curation and exploitation isn't just an add on. The project has seen over 700 individuals at partner institutions (Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, Oxford) consulted about their data needs. Despite the explosion in data production (a 360% rise over the next three years was dismissed as a conservative estimate!) most of it is lying around on laptops and USB ports. This is a global issue that is being addressed (partly) in the US (where five large datasets are being constructed over the next five years) and by projects in Australia, Canada and Germany. Next steps for UKRDS is to try to secure interim funding for a Pathfinder service to create a mini UKRDS for a selection of institutions, a project which it is hoped will prove scalable. An international conference (on 26 February 2009) will provide more details on the way forward (see www.ukrds.ac.uk).

As is customary, the morning slot finished with an update on SCONUL's activities from the SCONUL Chair. SCONUL is as busy as ever so I can't cover everything in detail. The main points raised by **Jane Core** were:

- there will be six vacancies on the Executive Board come June and anyone interested in getting involved was encouraged to have a chat with Jane or any other Board members;
- the review of the SCONUL Human Resources framework is now complete;
- a Website review is underway;

- new task groups are being established for Learning and Teaching, and for SCONUL's International Strategy;
- new premises will be sought for SCONUL HQ in 2009;
- the forthcoming Top Concerns Survey has been completed (see review in issue 44 of *Focus*);
- the Space Planning Group will be focusing on space for staff next year;
- the Performance Improvement Group is looking for a new Chair (Stephen Town was thanked for all his years of sterling service in this regard);
- following on from the recent LMS (Library Management Systems) project, SCONUL will conduct a feasibility study to look at the possibility of a shared service model and the allied business case.

Jane finished by giving out dates for our 2009 diaries: 11-15 May for a Study Tour of Denmark and Sweden; 10-12 June for the SCONUL Conference at Bournemouth.

One of the good things about the one day Autumn Conference is that there is plenty of time given for networking, and the lunch hour (and a quarter) provided a good opportunity to catch up with colleagues from across the sector.

Following a good British Library lunch we were treated to a taster of the 'Libraries of the future project' by **Derek Law**, the Programme Consultant. The aim of the project is to articulate a collective vision for the future of UK academic libraries.

The two-year programme will cover six areas:

- 1 advocacy and supporting activity;
- 2 managing born digital content;
- 3 new roles and new skills;
- 4 levels of infrastructure;
- 5 future users and their needs;
- 6 what is the core business and what is libraries' USP (Unique Selling Proposition)?

The project will look at strategic options, develop the transformational agenda and identify the leadership needed to deliver on any future visions. But it is not just the current leaders who need to be involved: Derek is keen to engage with younger librarians, the leaders and workforce of tomorrow, so is using Web 2.0 technologies to solicit their opinions.

Expect to hear more about this project in future issues of *Focus*.

Next up was **Diana Burton**, Pro Vice Chancellor at Liverpool John Moores University. Professor Burton is hugely busy (her full job title alone made me feel giddy) and she was only able to join the conference for her session (turning up five minutes before delivering her paper and disappearing five minutes after finishing). This was a shame as it meant she was not really able to put her thoughts into the context of the wider programme.

Diana began by surveying the characteristics of our Generation Y students and how this has impacted on pedagogical issues. This has thrown up a whole host of issues, some on the demand side (with increasingly demanding students and different groups for us to serve), others on the supply side (including how we respond to Wikipedia and which Web 2.0 technologies we should be embracing). She ended with a list of issues/questions that we need to address as a profession:

- How do we respond to different learning styles?
- How can we work more closely with academic colleagues?
- Should information professionals lead change in their institutions?
- What should our buildings be like?
- What political skills should we have?
- What is our role?

After “throwing down the gauntlet” it was left to **Sue McKnight** to pick it up. Sue more than rose to the challenge. She started by reminding us that “we are doing an awful lot and we can continue to do an awful lot and make a huge change.” The focus of Sue’s talk was the changing learning and teaching environment, how we are successfully supporting it and how we can be even more successful in the future. Sue reviewed the challenges we face: the out-of-date librarian stereotype which holds us back and encourages others to think poorly of us; the complex environment of multiple customer demographics, Web 2.0 anarchy and the increasing need to demonstrate a return on investment; our propensity to insularity, to talk to other librarians instead of other audiences. Quite a challenge. But there were even more opportunities and we are good at embracing them:

- we are partners in the learning and teaching process;
- we know our customers and are getting better at satisfying them;
- we are increasingly good at advocacy and we are building stronger partnerships with academic colleagues;
- we are professionals with professional ethics;

- we are academic librarians – we are academically very well qualified;
- we are politicians (or at least need to be!);
- we are IT savvy;
- we are managers;
- we can network – we know how to party!
- we are multi-faceted librarians!!

Sue brought all this together by giving us ‘SCONUL’s focus’, with an introduction to the work of the SCONUL Learning and Teaching Task and Finish Group, which is intended to provide a clear message about the benefits we bring to teaching and learning, backed up by a robust evidence base.

The day ended with a plenary session chaired by **Jane Core**, which saw many of the themes raised – plus a few other issues for good measure – debated further. All in all this was a lively conference which really made me think. Should I be exploring journal publishing as a way of getting closer to my academic departments at Warwick? How can my Subject Librarians save the time (and money) of academic colleagues in the scholarly publishing process? How will the ‘Libraries of the Future’ project help me direct the future of my own Academic Support division? How can I become a more multi-faceted librarian? By the end my head was buzzing.

Not bad for an autumn day so close to Christmas!

NoWAL conference, 'Up close and personal: our changing roles in a digital learning age', Edge Hill University, 5 September, 2008

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NoWAL (the North West Academic Libraries consortium) held a highly successful conference in September 2008 on the theme of the changing role of library and information professionals within the academic sector, which attracted delegates from all over north west England.

The first keynote speaker was Margaret Weaver, head of learning and information services, University of Cumbria. Her presentation, entitled 'Transformations through learning support services', addressed the ever-increasing student-oriented nature of higher education, and the need for academic and support services alike to focus far more on the student's needs and experiences in the delivery of learning. Some of her discussion was based around the final report of the 'Student Voices' project, ESCalate, 2007, debating the need to integrate support services and to rethink the whole learning context, creating a holistic learning environment.

The conference's afternoon keynote speaker was Alison Mackenzie, dean of learning services at Edge Hill University. Alison's presentation offered a personal view of the risks and challenges facing the information profession, stressing the importance of library and information services adding value to the learner experience. She discussed how library and information services can often tend to focus on internal processes, and lose sight of the external factors. Libraries must be sure to

engage in the learner journey and develop according to the customer's expectations.

As well as these inspirational and thought-provoking keynote presentations, there were also breakout sessions, which delegates were invited to attend. 'Blah, blah, blog' was one such workshop, in which Hannah Perkins of Coventry University and Simon Speight of the University of Warwick provided an interactive workshop about blogs and how they can be used within a library context. Their particular blogs focused around providing support for Endnote bibliographic referencing software, and a general subject blog. These were really useful and informative case studies, and Hannah and Simon were also keen to generate discussion and ideas around blogging and allowed everyone to think about how they could use blogs and share best practice. The other breakout session examined new roles for information professionals, new uses of technology in special collections and archives and supporting learning activities, all offering examples of good practice in areas of current interest to academic libraries.

The afternoon rounded off with a welcome chance to catch up with colleagues over tea and some excellent cream cakes before delegates headed off with a bag full of goodies. The full conference programme and PowerPoint slides from most of the presentations are available on the NOWAL web pages at http://www.nowal.ac.uk/training_and_development.php?page_id=140.

Now that's what I call Library 2.0: The Cilip Multimedia, Information and Technology Group Conference,

9 October 2008,
Manchester Conference Centre

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The Multimedia, Information and Technology Group (MmIT) is a CILIP special interest group interested in the sharing and discussion of best practice in the use of technology across the library and information profession. The group is cross-sectoral since technology in all its guises has a massive impact on every type of library service. The annual conference of the MmIT took the theme of 'Library 2.0', i.e. Web 2.0 applications and their use within library environments.

First to take the stage was Russell Prue, an ICT evangelist, who presented an overview of how Web 2.0 is currently being used in education and beyond. A very entertaining presenter, Russell set about his task with vigour and enthusiasm, making full use of the technologies available to him. He incorporated live text-messaging feedback and anecdotal YouTube video clips into his performance, including examples of how the world's youth have embraced the technologies available to them and are putting them to excellent use. 'Our young people aren't passive consumers, but active contributors' was one of Russell's key messages, and he delivered all of this in a highly entertaining fashion, allowing a truly uplifting start to the day.

Phil Bradley, *Library and Information Update* columnist and author of *How to use Web 2.0 in your Library*¹ was the conference's second presenter. Phil immediately set the scene by telling people not to get worried or concerned about any terminology and illustrated how too many people get too involved in the definition of 'Web 2.0' and 'Library 2.0', rather than just getting on and doing it! He highlighted that the question for librarians is not when, why and what we use Web 2.0 for, but how, when and why we use the internet in general for retrieving information. Phil then went on to talk very enthusiastically about all the web tools he uses in his day-to-day life as a consultant and as a librarian, suggesting to us all many different applications and how we might use them. These included RSS feeds, social bookmarking, MSN messaging, blogs, wikis and social networking. For each Web 2.0 tool, Phil presented us with many working examples and he highlighted the opportunities and challenges in all of them, pointing out that, with all of these web tools, we, the individuals are in control as to how we use them!

The final speaker of the morning was Iain Wallace, digital services development librarian at Glasgow Caledonian University. Iain's presentation began with an overview of what he regarded as 'Library 2.0' or 'Web 2.0' and then spoke about the 'Spoken Word Services' project that he has been involved in. This development (www.spokenword.ac.uk) has generated a repository of audio teaching and learning made available to everyone for educational purposes. Iain then went on to explain how he has used web applications to enhance and disseminate information about the project and the service in general. This includes tagging spoken-word records in Del.icio.us, pushing spoken-words records to iTunes, using Flickr, Facebook and Slideshare to share information about Spoken Word Services. He also links through to associated Wikipedia entries from the individual records within the Spoken Word catalogue.

The afternoon took a slightly different format, that of a debate between Professor Mark Stiles of Staffordshire University and Nick Woolley of King's College, London on the motion 'This house believes that libraries need to embrace Library 2.0 technologies in order to develop and deliver their services.'

Mark Stiles, professor of technology supported learning at Staffordshire, was speaking for the motion and started off his presentation explaining how he disliked the 'Web 2.0' label. He then went on to talk about his research into innovation and

control within the higher education sector, and argued how education's desire to enhance the learning experience with technology has created a generation of learners who are watched, monitored, measured, intervened upon and controlled more than ever, and that practices and systems tend to be organised for the institution's benefit rather than the learner's. Mark then suggested that new generations of learners already have the collaborative and sharing skills that we wish to promote, thanks in part to their everyday use of technology, including Web 2.0. Mark's arguments for the motion continued with discussion about how access to learning and to information resources has completely changed, and librarians have changed with it. Librarians therefore need to continue to change, alongside technological developments, in order to deliver their services.

Nick Woolley, information specialist for biomedical and health sciences at King's College, then went onto speak against the motion. He had entitled his presentation 'Vanishing in a puff of logic; or, Why Library 2.0 doesn't really exist'. Nick proceeded to speak most convincingly about the peculiarities of the concepts of Library 2.0. His arguments were about the label of 'Library 2.0' and he questioned why we would need such a label. He explained how libraries and librarians have always been able to change, as and when technologies or demands change. He illustrated that the single biggest change that the library world has experienced has in fact been the move from print to electronic resources, which has been continuously managed rather than involving a wholesale relabelling and relaunching of services. We are already doing what users want us to: adapting, changing and improving to meet user demands. Responding to the social web is just a part of this.

All delegates left the conference inspired and invigorated, ready to experiment with what they had learned with regard to making use of web applications. Similarly, they left agreeing that they don't have to put a 'Library 2.0' label onto all this new technology ... they just have to use it!

For a more thorough conference report and access to the conference presentations, please visit the MmIT Website:
<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/multimedia>

REFERENCE

1 London: Facet, 2007

The Library in the twenty-first century

Peter Brophy. Second edition,
Facet Publishing 2007, 248pp,
ISBN 978-185604-606-0

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Peter Brophy is one of the leading thinkers on the role of libraries, and well-known to SCONUL members as a provocative speaker and commentator. This book ably demonstrates why: as a passionate supporter of libraries Brophy is also extremely realistic about the threats to their continued existence and the need for change. As he says in the preface to the first edition, 'I believe in libraries but I fear for them'. *The library in the twenty-first century* asks what a library is, what it is for and what makes a good one, moving on to an analysis of the current challenges to libraries and how to respond to them.

The book starts with an overview of the development of information provision and the role of libraries as intermediaries, looking particularly at the very rapid rate of technological change in the past 25 years. The impacts of new ways of disseminating information such as social networking, mobile communications and print on demand are very clearly presented. Part 1 continues with the view from different library sectors and a look at cross-sectoral models, an overview of the opinions of the main professional bodies, the development of digital libraries and a summary of what makes a good library. Throughout, there is an emphasis on the value of libraries to the user and a strong message that to ensure their survival libraries must respond to changing needs and support user processes such as learning, rather than just provide access to information. These chapters pull together a great deal of recent research and opinion on the role of libraries today, and will be extremely useful to anyone studying or reflecting on how we got to where we are and the challenges that lie ahead.

Part 2 of the book looks to the future and examines how libraries are moving beyond the role of information intermediary. Changing user needs and behaviours and the information universe, particularly ICT developments, are analysed in detail. For library managers, this section is a very good summary of the main challenges all libraries have to address in strategic planning, building design and policy development. It combines "big picture" ideas and specific examples of recent developments in a very readable style, presenting a comprehensive overview which will be helpful to anyone planning the future direction of a library service. The final chapter identifies eight key issues libraries need to address going forward. In comparison to the broad scope and amount of material presented in the preceding chapters, this last section does appear rather short and lacking in strong arguments for particular courses of action. However, the author's intention is to resist prescription and allow individuals to decide on their own way forward based on the information presented in the rest of the book.

The first edition of this book was published in 2000 and, although it has been completely revised and rewritten, the fundamental arguments remain the same and have become even more pressing. Peter Brophy continues to present a perceptive and persuasive analysis of the threats to libraries from new technologies, new ways of working and the danger of failing to respond. This book provides both a wake-up call to the whole profession and grounds for optimism that libraries will reinvent themselves to meet the challenges of the future and ensure their survival.

Reader development in practice: bringing literature to readers

**Susan Hornby and Bob Glass (editors),
London: Facet Publishing, 2008, 224pp
(ISBN 978-1-85604-624)**

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I must begin by declaring a personal interest in this book. Two members of the *SCONUL Focus* editorial board and one member of the *SCONUL* executive belong to a reading group based in the North West of England, as does one of the book's editors. The reading group itself is reviewed in not entirely flattering terms in the final chapter of the book – more of this later, but it is fair to say that I would probably not have read this book without these connections and would have missed out on some valuable insights into readership, an activity we probably take too much for granted in our profession.

Reader development in practice is primarily a textbook designed for current practitioners and students on library and information courses but it will also be of interest to information professionals, publishers, educators and researchers. It examines all aspects of the relationship between the author and the reader and the chain of events connecting them, taking in publishing, technological changes, public-policy issues in the promotion of literacy, libraries, bookselling and reader development. The contributors are from a wide range of backgrounds including academics, writers, technologists and librarians. Personal perspectives from authors and readers complement each chapter. It is an easy book to dip into, with well-laid-out sections on the author as reader, reader development, works of imagination, future directions and the reader as author. The authors of each chapter are enthusiastic advocates in their area of expertise and often bring very personal perspectives to their particular topic.

All the writers have interesting and valuable comments to make about the process of communication between authors and readers. Several of them have devoted a great deal of time and energy to promoting reading, reaching out to non-readers and developing innovative strategies and activities to engage them. Much of the experience is drawn from the public library sector, with in-depth analysis of the barriers to reading, moving stories about 'light-bulb' moments when new readers are personally touched by an experience and the many campaigns run in the United Kingdom to promote reading activities and the discussion of literature. The widening-participation agenda is a high priority for many universities and it is clear from this book that without the dedicated efforts of those promoting reading many potential students would not have the awareness or confidence to develop their education and move into higher education. Other sections of the book examine the impact of new technologies on reading, such as the development of hypertext, electronic publishing and whether the e-book will supersede print entirely. A thought-provoking chapter examines the emergence of bleak, dystopian themes in literature for young people, challenging assumptions about childhood and young readers.

Working through this book I was reminded of a number of recent publications reflecting on the act of reading, particularly Alberto Manguel's *History of reading* and Francis Spufford's *The child that books built*. The importance of reading in childhood development is now widely accepted and the social and cultural aspects of reading are becoming more widely studied. There is a growing body of literature on 'books about books', some in response to the rapid growth of reading groups over the past decade in the United Kingdom. *Reader development in practice* makes a welcome contribution to the understanding of the process of reading and its impact on readers.

Reading groups are discussed in a number of different chapters, highlighting some of the problems – and many successes – experienced by their promoters in engaging new readers. The last word is left to a former member of our reading group, who highlights the problem of choosing the right reading group for you. I am sorry to report, dear readers, that she found us sadly lacking in intellectual rigour and observed that 'the commitment required for a whole Friday evening out was not sufficiently outweighed by the enjoyment I derived from the occasion'. Our determination to socialise, our adversarial style of debate and par-

ticularly our *Strictly Come Dancing* style of scoring were not to this member's liking. I am pleased to say that she found a new book group that met her expectations and she describes some of their activities in this chapter. Our own book group has some new members and continues to meet on Fridays to enjoy food, wine, convivial conversation and, of course, the joy of reading.

New publications

Average Prices of British Academic Books

January to June 2008 - Report no. 43
ISSN 0261 0302 - ISBN 978-1-905499-34-2
Published September 2008 - pp 18 A4

Average Prices of USA Academic Books

January to June 2008 - Report no. 43
ISSN 0951 8975 - ISBN 978-1-905499-35-9
Published September 2008 - pp 18 A4

LISU is pleased to announce the publication of the latest editions of *Average prices of British academic Books* and *Average prices of USA academic Books* (Report 43).

For further information (including details of formats, prices and purchasing options) see <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/lisu/pages/publications/abpi.html> or contact Claire Creaser, LISU, Tel: 01509 635682, email: lisu@lboro.ac.uk

News from member libraries

Imperial College London

The £11 million refurbishment project of Imperial College London's Central Library has been completed and the new facilities were officially opened by Imperial's Rector Sir Roy Anderson on 2 October.

Over 50 modern abstract canvases have been donated to the Library by Sussex artist Bob Brighton. The large scale works are on display throughout the ground floor of the building.

The Central Library has undergone two years of renovation and the ground floor level has been completely transformed to provide a modern, flexible working space for both group and individual study.

It now offers 150 new individual study spaces, 90 new computers, group study areas, a 30 seat training room that supports the library's delivery of information skills courses for students, and the Library Café.

It also boasts design features including a glass stairway in the main entrance, walnut joinery in the café and semi-transparent think tank areas for group study.

Consultation was a key feature of the refurbishment, with the Library team conducting a student survey to find out about their needs and researching how other libraries have been changing. Angus Brown, Team Leader in the Public Services Team in the Library, said: "Libraries are evolving and the new facilities reflect this. The increasing use of laptops by students and reliance on the internet for example meant that there is an emphasis on both personal use and College PC provision across the floor."

Future development of the Library will include renovating the other floors, installing cooling systems and introducing 24 hour opening throughout the academic year.

Funding for the refurbishment project was provided by Imperial College, the Wolfson Foundation and the Lisbet Rausing Trust.

Leeds Metropolitan University

DIGITISATION PROJECT

Leeds Met recently signed up to the new photocopying/scanning licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency, and has begun a digitisation project using a new book scanner and software to scan book chapters and journal articles. Collections of digitised readings will provide students with online access to key readings for their modules via the virtual learning environment, X-stream, easing pressure on high demand texts and particularly benefiting distance learning students.

ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The library has received a collection of historic journals from the National Cooperative Archive, on deposit at Leeds Met from the Cooperative College in Manchester. The archive will be housed in a special collections space in the Civic Quarter Library and will be available for staff and researchers to consult with appropriate support. More details regarding the specific contents of the collection and methods of accessing the materials, will be made available once the collection is available for use. We have also appointed a member of staff with responsibility for developing our archives.

LIBRARYTHING

LibraryThing, the social cataloguing web application, has been introduced, adding value to catalogue searches by providing enhancements such as:

- more valuable data for each book and more points of searching;
- high-quality "recommended" or "similar" books, that point to books available in the library;
- tag clouds for books, and tag-based search and discovery, drawn from the 41 million tags added by LibraryThing members;
- links to pages of other editions and translations of a work that can be found in the library.

WORTHY WINNERS

The library's academic support stream staff received a Leeds Met ACTs (Attitude, Characteristics and Talents) Award at a Dinner hosted by the Chancellor, Brendan Foster. They were successful

in the category of "Future Focus", highlighting their work in information literacy with the forthcoming launch of a "little book of information skills", in introducing new technology to their subject webpages and in creating online learning objects using software such as Captivate (see article in this issue of Focus).

LIBRARY FESTIVAL



The library continues to contribute to the University's calendar of festivals; in this instance with a "Library Festival" celebrating the work of Leeds Met and other libraries. The launch took the form of an overnight "Library Fest", an indoor mini-festival at Civic Quarter Library entitled "Under the Stars", with live bands and performers, DJ coaching, festival tents and stalls. Tuesday 25 November saw the birthday of Andrew Carnegie commemorated with a birthday party and an exhibition highlighting his philanthropy and work in establishing the Carnegie Free Libraries. The festival also included a professional development day for librarians including those from our Regional University Network colleges and students on the MSc Information Studies, with speakers from CILIP and InfoMatch. The finale was the launch of the Institutional Repository, with a



Andrew Carnegie birthday party

speaker from the JISC Repository Support Project. Throughout the week there were tours, visits to local libraries, a visit from a mobile library to encourage students and staff to join their local public library as part of the National Year of Reading, displays from local museums, coaching workshops on library and information-related skills, a library treasure hunt and the British Library's Digital Da Vinci, an electronic display of treasures of the British Library.

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STUDENT EXPERIENCE REVIEW AND REFURBISHMENT OF THE ALDHAM ROBERTS LRC

The Aldham Roberts learning resource centre is an attractive purpose-built resource centre that attracted a great deal of interest when it was completed in the mid-1990s. From January 2009 we will undertake a large-scale refurbishment project in the building to meet two current objectives. Following the development of a very successful social learning zone at the Avril Roberts LRC there was a desire to introduce the design concepts and learning support at the Aldham Roberts LRC and the funding for this work was approved in the summer of 2008. At around the same time, a major review of the student experience at Liverpool John Moores University made a number of recommendations for the future provision of services from the LRCs, which influenced the scale and design of the refurbishment project.

One of the outcomes of the review has been the decision to offer a number of front-line student services from administration centres within the three existing LRCs. Planning for the Aldham Roberts refurbishment has therefore taken into account the need to rethink the building as a new student centre, and to use this project as a blue-

print for the physical delivery of student services across the university.

The design that we will be working to represents a forward-thinking concept, by developing a whole new service model rather than simply moving all the existing services into one building. The model is based around a single point of contact, with no need for the student to have an understanding of either the structural organisation underlying the service delivery or the way in which the university defines his or her need. It includes a unified service point for everyone entering the centre, staffed by a dedicated, customer-focused 'welcome team' who will refer users to increasingly specialised help as and when needed. Staff will work proactively in taking services to clients wherever possible (via roving staff, open access consultation areas, IT systems and self-service facilities), rather than expecting an individual to travel between different service points.

LJMU USER SURVEYS 2008-2009

Learning and information services (LIS) came out very well in the university's student satisfaction survey for 2008. Our overall results are excellent, with improvements in most areas. Of the 26 areas surveyed across the university, LIS had the three top satisfaction scores, all over 80%. In November 2008 we ran the LibQUAL+ survey and achieved a good response rate by offering a laptop and iPods in a prize draw to participants. The results of both surveys will be used in planning future developments.

LEARNING AND INFORMATION SERVICES AT WELCOME WEEKS

The welcome week team who participated in freshers' week used our *Search Me!* theme, based around a giant word search offering the opportunity to win our ever-popular juggling balls. This year we also distributed LIS pencils and notebooks and a limited-edition recyclable mini-carrier-bag. As ever, we found that our stand at welcome week gave us a great opportunity to meet students and introduce them to LIS.



OTHER DEVELOPMENTS AT LJMU:

- the extension of roving enquiry services in all the learning resource centres
- a 'virtual online purse' through which students can pay for print and photocopy credits, as well as their library fines
- enhanced features to our electronic library, including enhancements to the metasearch and link-resolver services (MetaLib and SFX) within our Aleph library management system (these have been renamed 'Findit' and 'Fetchit' respectively, in response to student feedback)
- extension of laptop loans to all three learning resource centres.

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University of Plymouth

CAMPUS RELOCATIONS

Summer 2008 saw the completion of the four-year project to close the University's smaller campuses and relocate courses, services and facilities to Plymouth. By establishing a second library store, transferring less used material to both stores, adopting more e-only journals and relocating the Careers Service from the Library to elsewhere on campus we have been able to accommodate additional stock and study places in the main library.

As we needed to purchase some additional furniture, we took the opportunity to reconfigure existing areas which allowed us to create a flexible learning area with 40 spaces on the main entrance floor. This consists of mobile tables, whiteboards and screens, lightweight stacking chairs, a large 'peanut-shaped' table allowing group PC work (two fixed PCs in the centre) and two wall-mounted LCD screens. This area has proved very popular with the students who are now beginning to realise it is okay to move the furniture around and reconfigure the space as they wish. In fact this seems to have led to furniture moving in the rest of the library which was not quite the desired outcome! We are evaluating the use of the flexible space in order to inform future developments. We would also like to introduce a wider range of technology in this area (interactive whiteboards, etc).

Due to the relocation of stock from the other campuses, we have had to put more material into store. To alleviate this, the Library is currently trialling the extension of our very successful SED (secure electronic delivery) service to include elec-

tronic delivery of articles to the patron's mailbox. This saves the patron having to visit the Library to collect or copy the item, ensures the patron gets the information as quickly as possible, and in the longer-term we hope improves the Library's business processes.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

Over the summer we enhanced our already well-regarded support for students with individual needs, either due to disability or distance from the institution. We have purchased three laptops with assistive technology and MP3 players, enabling students with disabilities to use suitable software when on campus without being limited to a single PC.

TextHELP Read&Write software is now available on all Plymouth campus student computers, including those in the Library. This software contains many features designed to assist students with literacy problems (including dyslexia) with reading and writing: for example, text-to-speech, a phonetic spell checker, word prediction, a speaking dictionary and a scanning facility.

Last academic year also saw the introduction of web payments to add money to students' Print Accounts. This academic year will see this extended to web payment of *Voyager* (Library Management System) charges. This means students do not have to visit the Library during Library Counter opening hours to top-up printing and copying cards.

STAFFING

Julie Luxton, Senior Subject Librarian for Education has relocated to Plymouth to continue to offer support to her Faculty.

Rosemary Smith also relocated from Exmouth, moving from the role of Campus Coordinator to a newly created post of Planning and Quality Manager, reporting directly to the Director of ILS.

Theresa Oakley has recently been appointed as Subject Librarian for Health, Nursing and Sociology. Theresa has previously worked on a temporary basis at our Exeter campus, and at Southampton University Library.

Fiona Greig

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University of Reading

MAPS ON THE ROAD

Over the summer of 2008, we successfully completed a project to assimilate Reading's unique map collections into our Main Library Whiteknights. The relocation implements the University's 2006 decision to integrate the Map Library which was formerly associated with the Department of Geography. We also gain the skills and knowledge of its experienced Map Librarian, Judith Fox.

TALKING JAPANESE

Following the demise of the former Witan International College, whilst the University regained the buildings it used, we were given the contents of its English and Japanese language library. We added about 700 books to our own collections, gave about 2,000 to a higher education college library and to the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, sold around 7,500 in a giant book-sale, sent the remaining English language material to a dealer and recycled the rest.

MINDING THEIR OWN BUSINESS SCHOOL LIBRARY

On 1 August 2008, the University of Reading and Henley Management College merged into the new 'Henley Business School at the University of Reading', potentially the largest business school in Europe. The University Library has revised subject liaison support accordingly and we are working closely with Henley staff on online licence agreements and registration matters. Currently the Powergen Library at Henley remains effectively a faculty resource cooperating with, but independent from, the University Library.

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University of Wales Lampeter

RODERIC BOWEN LIBRARY OPENED

The Roderic Bowen Library, housing the special collections of the University of Wales Lampeter, was officially opened by the First Minister for Wales, Rhodri Morgan, on the 17 October 2008.

The special collections had previously been held in the original University Library, renamed the Founders' Library in 1994. The Founders' Library provided the reader with the opportunity to consult material in its original home - a library designed by architect Charles Robert Cockerell

that unfortunately could not be adapted to conform to required environmental standards for rare books and archival material. Thus the decision was taken to build a new library for the special collections adjacent to the University's main library.

Before building began on the Roderic Bowen Library, the daunting task of rearranging and reclassifying the collections got under way. Books had previously been arranged according to subject but it was decided that by classifying books by provenance we could carry something of the Founders' Library with us to the modern Roderic Bowen library.

The bulk of the collection therefore now consists of three main collections: the Burgess Collection, those books given by College Founder Bishop Thomas Burgess (1756 – 1837); the Bowdler Tract collection, tracts given by Dr Thomas Bowdler (1754 – 1825); and the Phillips collection, books given to the newly opened - and at the time only - higher education institution in Wales, by retired East India Surgeon Thomas Phillips (1760-1851). Smaller but no less welcome collections are grouped together as being from 'Other Donors', with provenance information easily accessible from the catalogue record.

Reclassifying of the collections took some two and a half years. Moving the books themselves, undertaken with supervision from library staff by Harrow Green of Bristol, was completed in twenty (long!) days in December 2007.

The opening in October 2008 was extremely well attended by librarians from Wales and England, local town councillors, staff and students of the University and was well received by all. Among items exhibited on the day were the 'Lampeter Bible' (an illuminated manuscript of the Vulgate Bible, written over a period of three years and completed in 1279 by a monk at the monastery of St. Pierre-sur-Dives in Normandy, and bequeathed to Lampeter by Bishop Burgess) and items from the college archives, including some of the original papers discussing the possibility of building the college in the local village of Llandewi-Brefi.

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The Wellcome Library

The Wellcome Library is delighted to announce that Gillian Boal has been appointed to head up Conservation and Collection Care at the Wellcome Library, London.

Gillian is returning to the UK after moving to the United States in the 1980's. She trained at the Camberwell School of Art and Crafts and in the studio of Sydney Cockerell in Grantchester. She is currently Head of Conservation at the University of California in Berkeley.

Gillian will be heading up an expanded team of conservators who will oversee the ongoing conservation programme, including preparation of Wellcome Library materials for exhibition both in Wellcome Collection and at other international destinations.

She will also oversee the work needed to ensure protection of Library items as they are sent for digitisation and will bring in conservation trainees to work in the state-of-the-art conservation studios.

Gillian will take up her new role in January 2009.

NEEO

Finding Economics research outputs will soon be a piece of cake

On 4 September the Nereus consortium celebrated the Mid-Project meeting for the NEEO project. As reported in issue 42 of *Focus*¹, NEEO (Network of European Economists Online) is an European Union-funded project which will address the lack of integration of academic output amongst premier European economics institutions by creating a powerful new research tool called Economists Online.



Economists Online will increase the visibility of economists' research by collecting it in a single, cross-searchable portal, which will also include comprehensive individual publication lists. Additionally, Economists Online content will appear in other economics search services as well as the large internet search engines, and Nereus will seek to improve economists' rankings in all of these.

More details about Economist Online can be found at <http://www.nereus4economics.info/econline.html>.

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NOTES

1. Geleijnse, H. and Williams, P. NEEO and Economists Online, *SCONUL Focus*, 42, Winter 2007, p.33-35

Advice for authors

SCONUL Focus is the journal of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries. It 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 higher education college sector.

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.

Although we do not make strict stipulations about length we do recommend authors to consult a recent issue of *SCONUL Focus* to see if their approach seems in keeping with other published pieces.

SCONUL Focus is published in both paper and electronic versions. The electronic version is on open access via the SCONUL Web site. Any author who does not wish to have their article made available via the Web should let the Editor know.

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email: sconul@sconul.ac.uk. An online version can be found via www.sconul.ac.uk.

Items should be submitted (preferably) via email or on disk to your contact on the Editorial Board or Antony Brewerton (antony.brewerton@warwick.ac.uk).

As well as text, we are also keen to publish images and would especially like to include author photos where possible. Please either send prints or digital photographs (resolution 300 dpi or above) to your contact on the Editorial Board.

It is helpful if authors follow our house style when submitting their articles:

- Spelling in '-ise' etc. is preferred to '-ize'.
- Capitalisation is ruthlessly minimal. In individual libraries it is usual to refer to 'the Library', 'the University', 'the College' etc. Please resist this in our newsletter: unless there is any ambiguity use 'the library' etc.
- Spell out acronyms at their first occurrence. Avoid 'HE' for 'higher education', which we prefer to write in full (our overseas readers may be unfamiliar with the abbreviation HE).
- Please use single quotation marks, not double.
- Web addresses should be written in full and –where possible– be underlined for purposes of clarity.
- References should appear as numbered footnotes at the end of the article, in the following forms (we prefer not to reverse surnames and initials)

1 A.N.Author, *Title of book*, Place: Publisher, 2000, pp 23-6

2 P.B.Writer, 'Title of chapter or article', in Q.V.Editor, ed., *Interesting articles about libraries*, Place: Publisher, 2000, pp 262-3

3 B.M.Researcher, 'Title of article', *Journal of pseudodocumentalism*, 70 (2), 1989, pp 117-20

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We look forward to hearing from you.

