



JISC



RLUK



## Academic libraries of the future

# Final report

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## List of abbreviations

BL	British Library
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LotF	Libraries of the Future
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Societal, Technological, Legal and Environmental
RIN	Research Information Network
RLUK	Research Libraries UK
SCONUL	Society of College, National and University Libraries

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 General

- 1.1.1 The academic libraries of the future project (LotF) is sponsored by the British Library (BL), the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), Research Information Network (RIN), Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL). LotF is being carried out by Curtis+Cartwright Consulting Ltd (Curtis+Cartwright) supported by staff from SAMI Consulting Ltd (SAMI).
- 1.1.2 LotF has developed three scenarios which describe possible futures for teaching, academic and research libraries in the UK, particularly in the context of the changing academic and technological landscape. The scenarios will help Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other organisations look at the challenges faced from a fresh perspective and help them formulate strategies to ensure the sector continues to be a leading global force.
- 1.1.3 The terms 'library' and 'librarian' are used throughout. This is not intended to imply that libraries or librarians as we know them will continue to exist; rather these are a convenient shorthand for an organisation or individual that carries out all or any aspects of information/knowledge management, curation and preservation and information literacy training. Similarly, 'librarianship' is a convenient shorthand for all aspects of the skill sets required to be a good 'librarian'. There can be no universal assumption that a library, librarians or librarianship will exist in 2050.

## 1.2 Objective of this document

- 1.2.1 This document summarises the work carried out during the LotF project and suggests how the work should now be carried forward by the project sponsors.
- 1.2.2 This particular version of the report (V1.0) is for approval by the LotF sponsoring board.

## 1.3 Why this study?

- 1.3.1 Libraries are fundamental to academic learning, teaching and research. However, the world is, and will continue to be, a constantly changing place. Uncertainties for the long-term future include: how UK Higher Education (HE) will be funded and operated; how information will be created, discovered, accessed and managed; how learning, teaching and research will evolve to take best advantage of improvements in Information and Communications Technology (ICT); the information needs of users for learning, teaching and research, the knowledge economy, and students and researchers as 'consumers'. The fundamental question is how to plan for libraries to meet these potentially disruptive challenges
- 1.3.2 Developing and implementing business strategies over a three- to five-year timescale is now commonplace in HE. Looking beyond this horizon (over ten to 20 years, or more) is less common and more challenging. To improve decision-making and plan effectively for the future, this longer timescale also needs to be considered and scenario planning is a well-tried means of doing this. Scenarios describe a world some distance away in the future, let us say 2050. The choice of this date encouraged workshop participants to challenge their current world view and respond in imaginative and sometimes radical ways.

## 1.4 Scenario planning

1.4.1 There are many available resources to help with understanding and using scenario planning. Useful guidance can be found in books by Gill Ringland,<sup>1,2</sup> on the JISC InfoNet website<sup>3</sup> and on the FOR-LEARN website.<sup>4</sup> However, as ever, practical experience is the key.

## 1.5 Project website

1.5.1 The project website ([www.futurelibraries.info](http://www.futurelibraries.info)) contains this report and all the materials referenced. The website also provides a record of the separate workshops, including agendas, attendees, presentations given, input papers and outputs.

## 1.6 Overview of this document

1.6.1 This document sets out:

- an overview of the how the scenarios were created, tied to the LotF workshops held in 2010 and 2011 (Section 2);
- guidance and recommendations for how the scenarios should be taken forward (Section 3).

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<sup>1</sup> *Scenario planning*, Gill Ringland, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, John Wiley and Sons, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> *Scenarios in public policy*, Gill Ringland, John Wiley and Sons, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/tools/scenario-planning> (accessed 14 March 2011).

<sup>4</sup> <http://forlearn.jrc.ec.europa.eu> (accessed 14 March 2011).

## 2 Creating the scenarios

### 2.1 Development of the scenarios

2.1.1 The scenarios are based on the contributions from around 80 stakeholders at two workshops in the spring of 2010 and three smaller workshops to flesh out the detail in the summer of 2010. The overall timeline is shown at Figure 2-1. The wide range of influential stakeholders included institutional senior managers, librarians, funders, students, researchers, legal specialists, service providers, publishers, technologists and government policy makers. The scenarios and analysis in this document provide a broad overview of the broad global political, economic and social environment in 2050, the nature of HE within this environment, how libraries might be organised and the services (including physical space) they might offer. The scenarios are made up of common assumptions about the future plus scenario-specific descriptions.

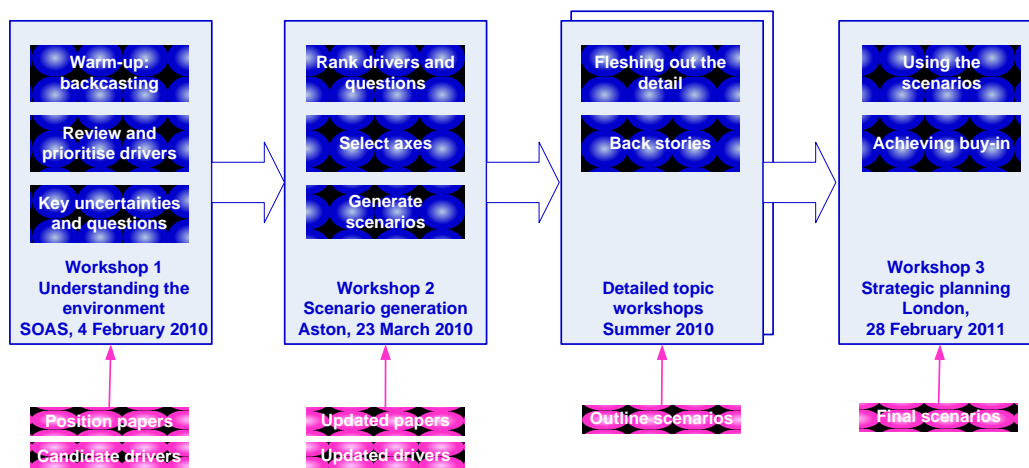


Figure 2-1: Timeline for LotF

2.1.2 A final workshop held in February 2011 used a strategic planning exercise (see sub-section 2.5) to demonstrate the utility of the scenarios. It also provided useful feedback which has been incorporated in the scenarios.

### 2.2 Understanding the environment

2.2.1 The project team began by scoping the current HE and library environment and the pressures on this environment that might lead to change. This was done through discussion at project team workshops of a series of working papers:

- a horizon scan, setting out a Political, Economic, Societal, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) analysis of the environment for HE and libraries of the future and a review of relevant studies on libraries of the future;<sup>5</sup>
- an assessment of the current position, pressures and likely developments in the following topics:<sup>6</sup>
  - content acquisition;
  - stewardship, including storage, collection care, preservation *etc*;

<sup>5</sup> *Horizon scan*, CC413D036-1.0, 18 May 2011, WORKING PAPER.

<sup>6</sup> The separate papers on these topics have been collected together as a single document, *Background papers*, CC413D041-1.1, 18 May 2011, WORKING PAPER.

- search and navigation;
- information skills and training;
- repository and publications services;
- space for learning, teaching and research;
- developments in information technology.

- 2.2.2 These working papers provided an overview of each theme, issues, a view of important drivers for the future and what may be in store for the future. They are not outputs of the project; rather they are part of the horizon scanning work and inputs to the scenario development process.
- 2.2.3 The working papers were used to develop a set of potential drivers.<sup>7</sup> This formed the basis for discussion at Workshop 1 on the global and HE environments for LotF in around 2050. The workshop covered both the completeness of the drivers and assessed how important they would be in shaping the UK HE landscape for the next ~30-50 years. The output from this process was a set of eight key questions for HE as input to developing the drivers at Workshop 2.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.2.4 A ‘warm-up’ exercise at Workshop 1 asked attendees to develop a ‘backcast’ of how current academic libraries for research, and teaching and learning had developed since 1950.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.3 Scenario generation

- 2.3.1 The eight questions for HE were examined at Workshop 2 as candidate axes for generating scenarios for LotF in 2050:
- 1) Are values open or closed?
  - 2) Is the Higher Education system diverse or discrete?
  - 3) Is higher education nationally or globally bounded?
  - 4) Is the emphasis on quantity or quality of students?
  - 5) How mobile are students, teachers and researchers?
  - 6) Is the emphasis on public or private funding of research, teaching and learning?
  - 7) Is regulation of research outputs dominated by the markets or the state?
  - 8) Is higher education regarded as primarily an economic benefit?
- 2.3.2 The attendees at Workshop 2 ranked the questions to identify those that would have the highest impact on the future, and those to which the answer is most uncertain. These form the axes for scenarios and comprised:
- whether society and HE have open or closed values. This is a measure of the overall values of the society and the legal or cultural constraints and protections for ownership, use and exchange of information.
  - whether the emphasis is on quantity or quality of students.
  - whether HE provision is dominated by the state or by the market.<sup>10</sup>
- 2.3.3 These axes give rise to eight possible scenarios. The workshop attendees shortlisted six scenarios for further discussion.<sup>11</sup> Following Workshop 2, the project team analysed the scenarios, especially

<sup>7</sup> *Academic libraries of the future: UK HE drivers*, CC413D010-1.0, 31 March 2011.

<sup>8</sup> *Scenario axes selection: key questions for HE*, CC413D018-1.0, 12 March 2010.

<sup>9</sup> *Final illustrated timeline*, CC413D017-1.0, March 2010.

<sup>10</sup> The term market is retained because it was used in the workshops but in reality there can be market approaches both within state and private sector provision.



the similarities and the differences between them and how interesting they would prove for libraries. Three distinct scenarios were recommended for taking forward and were confirmed by the LotF board. Two of these combined features of a number of the outline scenarios and essentially collapsed the quantity or quality axis of the scenario space. Short flyers were subsequently produced describing these three final outline scenarios.<sup>12</sup>

- 2.3.4 A series of three workshops were held at Edinburgh, Cardiff and London over summer 2010 to seek librarians' views on the implications of the scenarios for libraries, librarians and librarianship. This information was used to flesh out the scenarios and lead to publication of the detailed scenarios.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.4 Overview of the scenarios

- 2.4.1 It is important to remember that scenarios are not predictions about the future; rather they describe possible futures. Each scenario has been given a descriptive name which expresses the essence of the scenario to the reader.<sup>14</sup> These scenarios are not intended to be 'preferred' scenarios; each just describes one possible future world.
- 2.4.2 The scenarios can never describe the various worlds in full detail. Indeed, it is essential to leave room for 'what ifs' as part of the strategic planning process.

### *Wild West scenario*



The phrase 'Wild West' has entered colloquial use to describe any situation that has a no-holds-barred, free-for-all flavour. It is used in precisely this way as the name for this scenario. Specifically, this world is dominated by capitalism and corporate power, including the HE sector.

- 2.4.3 In this world private providers compete with each other and the state to offer students educational services, including information services and learning material. The power lies in the hands of the consumer ('student' being a rather old-fashioned term) who is able to pick and choose from courses and learning materials to create a personal educational experience.

### *Beehive scenario*



'Beehive' is intended to draw obvious parallels with the hierarchical and structured life of the bee colony, where all is ordered to ensure the common good of the whole community.

<sup>11</sup> These initial scenarios are documented in *Outline scenarios*, CC413D022-0.2, 12 May 2010.

<sup>12</sup> There are separate flyers for each of *Wild West* (CC413D028(1)-1.0), *Beehive* (CC413D028(2)-1.0) and *Walled Garden* (CC413D028(3)-1.0), all dated 14 June 2010.

<sup>13</sup> *Scenarios for 2050*, CC413D040-1.0, 18 May 2011.

<sup>14</sup> The descriptive names for each scenario (Wild West, Walled Garden and Beehive) are chosen to represent the essence of each future world. The names were chosen after the second workshop during the process of selecting from a long list of potential scenarios the three considered to offer the most interesting futures for academic and research libraries. In considering names we drew on the suggestions generated at the workshop, and on the characteristics captured by our two primary axes: State/Market controlled and Open/Closed values.

- 2.4.4 The Beehive scenario is a world in which society and HE have open values and the state is the primary funder and controller of HE. Its overriding aim is the production of a skilled workforce, and to this end it has created a largely homogenous HE system for the masses while allowing the elite to attend the few traditional institutions. A limited market is used to provide competition within the HE system to drive up quality.

### **Walled Garden scenario**



A 'Walled Garden' is an oasis, shut-off from the outside world. Inhabitants of the garden neither know nor care much about the world beyond the garden's comforting walls. After all, how could the flowers out there possibly be any better than those within the garden?

- 2.4.5 HEIs in this scenario are 'Walled Gardens'. The closed nature of society makes HEIs insular and inward-looking, isolated from other institutions by competing value systems. Provision of information services in this world is as much concerned with protecting their own materials from others as it is in enabling access.

### **Positioning of scenarios**

- 2.4.6 The general positioning of these three scenarios against the open/closed and market/state axes is illustrated in Figure 2-2.

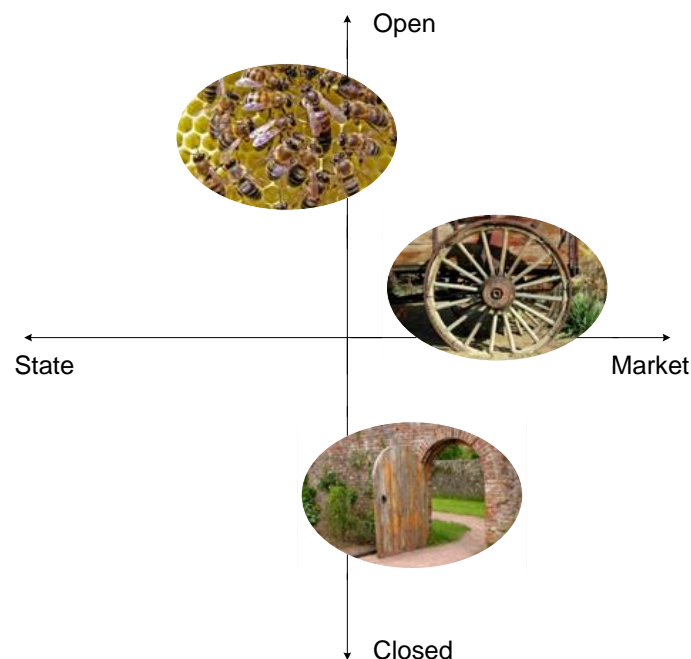


Figure 2-2: The scenarios positioned according to the dominant scenario characteristics

## **2.5 Using the scenarios**

- 2.5.1 A final workshop (Workshop 3) was held in February 2011 and used a strategic planning exercise to demonstrate the utility of the scenarios. The approach to and outputs from this workshop

were used to create a 'how to' guide for strategic planning using the scenarios.<sup>15</sup> Workshop 3 also provided useful feedback which has been incorporated in the scenarios.

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<sup>15</sup> *How to use the scenarios*, CC413D042-1.0, 18 May 2011.

## 3 Recommendations

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The outputs from the LotF project provide HE institutions and the library sector with a coherent set of scenarios and advice and guidance on how to apply them. If this is used, and used correctly, it will allow the development and of comprehensive long term strategic plans for libraries, which will allow the needs of the UK and of the HE sector for library capabilities to be met until well into the twenty first century. Sub-sections 3.2, 3.4 and 3.4 recommend what needs to be done next.
- 3.1.2 It is understood that the LotF board is developing an approach to launching and using the LotF work, so many of these proposed activities may already have been tackled.
- 3.1.3 The project team also sets out its view of critical risks (sub-section 3.5) that need to be managed to ensure that the end state desired by the LotF board can be achieved in full.

### 3.2 What the LotF board needs to do

- 3.2.1 The LotF board needs to:
- take stock by reviewing the outputs and outcomes of the LotF project and deciding how to take forward the use of the scenarios for strategic planning by institutions and the sector;
  - once this decision is made, develop the plans for taking it forward and identify any funding necessary;
  - develop governance arrangements appropriate for rolling out, supporting and maintaining the scenarios and related documentation for the sector;
  - discuss and agree the way ahead with the five sponsors (BL, JISC, RIN, RLUK and SCONUL).
- 3.2.2 Once agreement on the way ahead has been reached, the new governance arrangements and funding need to be put in place and the plans executed.
- 3.2.3 Experience suggests that successful take-up and use of the scenarios by the academic library community and the library sector will require the following elements which are considered in turn below:
- early, successful and publicised use by a small number of institutions;
  - awareness by senior institutional and library managers of the scenarios and their utility;
  - long-term sector-level commitment to the scenario planning process;
  - support for the strategic planning process (*eg* provision of training and experienced and impartial facilitators).

#### ***Early, successful and publicised use***

- 3.2.4 It is suggested that this would best be achieved through establishing:
- one or two pilots at representative institutions (*eg* one research intensive, one teaching and learning intensive);
  - a pilot by a sector representative body to investigate strategy at the sector level.

- 3.2.5 In both cases, there needs to be support for carrying out the scenario planning (*eg* training the participants in scenario planning and these scenarios, in particular) and/or providing experienced facilitators. The LotF board needs to seek possible pilots now.
- 3.2.6 The outputs and outcomes from the pilots need to be developed into case studies as part of the communications materials for distribution to potential users (see paragraph 3.2.8).

### ***Awareness***

- 3.2.7 There needs to be a comprehensive and clear communications plan setting out the LotF stakeholders, the plans for communicating with them, and with the specialist library and national press and media.
- 3.2.8 The communications plan needs to be supported by:
- a LotF website: this would be a development of the one used during the LotF project and would include news, informative articles and case studies to support take-up and use of the scenarios;
  - a regular emailed newsletter.

### ***Long-term sector-level commitment***

- 3.2.9 The following are suggested as means of demonstrating long-term commitment to the use of the LotF scenarios:
- appointing an owner for the scenarios with responsibility for championing their use, maintaining and developing the scenarios and other materials, and ensuring support is provided;
  - committing a low-level of funding for two years, initially, and extendible for up to five in the first instance, if the take-up is successful, to support this.
- 3.2.10 This raises the question of what is meant by success. In the short- to medium-term it is suggested that this could be determined by the level of interest shown in training courses, lectures on the scenarios at conferences, website hits etc. In the medium- to long-term an assessment of whether there is better strategic planning being carried out in the sector (*eg* through an on-line survey of librarians and senior institutional managers).

### ***Support***

- 3.2.11 Experience of using scenarios for strategic planning and understanding the LotF scenarios are prerequisites for successful use of the LotF scenarios. This suggests that the following support is needed:
- training in strategic planning using scenarios (*eg* for the library senior management team or potential facilitators);
  - training in the specifics of the scenarios (*eg* for the library senior management team or potential facilitators);
  - a cadre of suitable experienced and trained facilitators able to help institutions with strategic planning using the scenarios and/or developing institution-specific scenarios; this could be consultants and/or librarians/managers from other institutions;

- regular identification, interpretation and publication of early indicators to the LotF community; these will help to indicate which scenario might occur.

### 3.3 What the institutions need to do

3.3.1 Each institution needs to:

- consider whether it wishes to be part of the piloting of strategic planning for libraries using the LotF scenarios and, if so, engage:
  - with the LotF board; and
  - if appropriate, take part in the pilot;
- review the outcomes of the proposed pilots for strategic planning using the LotF scenarios;
- if the pilots are successful, consider adopting the use of the LotF scenarios for the next round of the institution’s library strategic planning;
- if agreed, use the strategic planning process set out in the ‘how to use the scenarios’ document;<sup>16</sup>
- provide feedback on the process and scenarios to the LotF champion.

### 3.4 What the sector needs to do

3.4.1 Sector level bodies need to:

- all take part in a sector-level strategic planning exercise;
- provide feedback on the process and scenarios to the LotF champion.

### 3.5 Risks

3.5.1 Table 3-1 overleaf sets out an initial risk assessment and potential mitigations for taking forward the use of the LotF scenarios for strategic planning of institutions’ libraries and the sector.

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<sup>16</sup> *How to use the scenarios*, CC413D042-1.0, 18 May 2011.

Risk	Probability / Impact	Mitigation
Insufficient institutions can be found to become a pilot project.	L/M	<i>Contingency:</i> provide free support (eg training, facilitators etc).
The multi-sponsor arrangements prove to be difficult for decision making.	H/M	<i>Reduction:</i> The LotF board needs to develop a good plan, with strong governance; the LotF board also needs to get agreement of the plan with the stakeholders.
The scenarios become increasingly out of date.	L/M	<i>Reduction:</i> Refresh the scenarios (eg after two to three years of use).
Library staff not involved in the scenario development process may not understand the scenarios or take them seriously.	M/M	<i>Reduction:</i> provide training for leaders/facilitators using the scenarios for strategic planning.
Library staff not able to use the scenario planning approach because of lack of experience.	M/H	<i>Reduction:</i> provide training for leaders/facilitators using the scenarios for strategic planning.

Table 3-1: Risk assessment for taking forward the use of the scenarios for 2050