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# SCONUL Focus

## Number 43

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### **Editorial information**

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*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.

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## Web 2.0, Library Brand 3.0

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I have recently been putting together a new workshop on branding and library services. Such activities are always a combination of pleasure and pain: the pain of spending sunny Sundays locked indoors reading marketing textbooks whilst the rest of the world is enjoying themselves; the pleasure of actually learning new things and finding time to think.

Two things really jumped out from my research.

One was the concept of the customer journey map. One of the things I always stress with branding/marketing is that responsibility for it remains with everyone in the organisation ...not just a 'Marketing Group'. The customer journey map (as the name suggests) maps every step of the customer's journey, from realisation of demand to (hopefully) us fulfilling that demand. This can be used to show how we all interact with the customer (front of house staff, web designer, planner) and are hence all responsible for the brand.

After using this tool myself to come up with teaching examples for a variety of scenarios, I was struck just how that journey had changed over the years. In my model from the 1960s (and apologies for the stereotypes ahead!) Janet uses the library to find books on knitting. Throughout the journey everything is done by the librarians (search catalogue, take Janet to the shelves, issue book, return book, administer fine/warnings...). The end user is passive. Zoom to 2008 and everything has changed. When Amy goes to the library to find

resources on sports psychology she has already checked out the catalogue online and downloaded a few chapters from e-books before she herself finds books in the library (she has attended information skills sessions in the past and consults the floor walkers during her visit), which she issues on the self issue machine and renews online (no fines or nagging library staff for Amy!). The end user is very much in control.

Concept Number 2 that really struck home was concerned with the history of branding (stick with me ..it *will* be worth it). Branding has really gone through three 'waves':

**Wave 1:** Brands as a guarantee of physical quality (principally, Industrial Revolution to the present)

**Wave 2:** Brands as statements to express personality/'community' (1960s onwards)

**Wave 3:** Brands as partners with consumers, with consumers influencing design, playing a more active role in the brand community (2000s)

As librarians we did well with Wave 1 (quality stock selection, cataloguing and all that). The trouble is, we got stuck there. We missed Wave 2 – well who wants to be in the librarians' club? But we could get back on board with Wave 3. Despite my facetious comments, we actually have a pretty good relationship with our customers/clients/users, something facilitated by the huge number of contact points/interactions they have with us. We are in a very good position to work with our communities to develop our offering and hence develop the brand and ensure its on-going relevance.

Marvellous, Ant. But what has this got to do with this issue of *SCONUL Focus*?

Well, both these branding points can be facilitated by Web 2.0 technologies, which provide the main focus of this issue. Why have a standard interface when you can be in control and customise it? Why put up with the library product you have been offered all these years if you can blog your library and get them to improve it for you?

This issue of *Focus* provides an overview of the state of blogging in the UK Higher Education library sector with a personal view from Paul Williams and Peter Williams' excellent 'state of the nation' report. Jane Secker continues this Web 2.0 theme with a review of the LASSIE project, whilst Alison Williams and Mary Hudson report on life in Second Life. Video gaming to improve information skills is also covered and even our book reviews include a review of Tara Brabazon's 'University of Google'.

So if you are already on Wave 3 and want to make the brand more responsive to customer demand - or if you are new to the possibilities that Web 2.0 developments have to offer - read on. There's a whole new world of opportunity out there ...for our users and for us.

Antony Brewerton  
*SCONUL Focus* Editorial Board

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## Don't believe the hype: blogging with your feet on the ground



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The last five years have seen a landslide of information heralding the future of the online library as a shining utopia, laden with indistinct technologies and remarkably fuzzy waves of service-changing applications. Web 2.0 would redefine our profession, but just wait for Web 3.0, and then we'll be able to do *so much more*. Library 2.0 looked like a new dawn, but again so many of our successes were implied, or simply yet to come. Conferences were bogged down in unfulfilled anticipation and crystal-ball-gazing, where we collectively 'oohed' and 'aahed' at the next set of possibilities. The future looks so exciting, and believe me it actually is, but when do we get to the bit where we start doing rather than waiting? When does the technology get to the point where it's tested and complete, when it's safe enough to put out there in front of our patrons?

Well, the short answer is that it'll never get to that point, and if we wait then we'll continue to wait indefinitely. But that's only half of the story. The point is that all of these applications labelled as Web 2.0 are in a perpetual beta test, developing and testing new ideas and functionality in a live environment. They are expanded upon and evolved by their customers just as much as their creators. If we don't use them now, they will become something else by next year, and their potential will have altered, putting us into a permanent state of 'catch-up'. Confusing and bewildering I know, but it's this fluidity which is the most attractive feature of this latest wave of technology. They provide the tools, and we provide the uses for them. The technology is really just the starting point.

So, let's take a look at what we can do right now - today. The future is full of dramatic leaps in

web services, streamlining our information and making links between applications, but our needs as a profession are here and now. And there are plenty of uses for what have up until now been seen as fairly 'fringe' pieces of software.

Firstly, a fairly easy question to answer. Do you want to communicate with the users of your library? Forget posting opening hours online and providing a set of links to your databases – do you *really* want to communicate? Do you want your staff to speak openly about their roles, knowledge and expertise? Do you want your users to speak just as openly back? Do you want to hear what they have to say? I think that in the competitive world of information management, the answer has to be a resounding 'yes'. If our users don't believe in what we do, they will quite simply turn to Google. If they don't understand the benefits of being guided to the highest-quality sources of information, and trust us to take them there, then they can so easily find others who will claim that they can. So, just talk to them. Let the staff who provide the services sell them in their own words. That's the fundamental reason that we blog at the University of Worcester – we have to communicate.

There are several reasons why blogging is the staple of our communication strategy. As mentioned above, the applications are constantly changing, so their potential uses are down to us. Technorati,<sup>1</sup> and other blog search engines, will expose millions of these applications online and, in terms of content, they are absolutely no different to websites. Name a subject and I'll show you a thousand blogs. In fact, at first glance, it can be difficult to distinguish any difference at all between traditional sites and the most basic of weblogs. Text, pictures and even the odd video clip, are all accessed through a browser, providing information, opinion and links out to similar sites on the web. Except that this is where we come back to the thorny issue of communication. Blogs are spectacularly easy to set up, so in twenty minutes you could build, configure and post to a blog with no technical expertise or previous experience necessary. This is a level of accessibility we've just never encountered before, even with the advent of Content Management Systems and hosted website builders. Put simply, everyone is a potential blogger – you just might not know it yet.

Given this unprecedented ease of use, blogging has side-stepped our more traditional library sites, in terms of style and ownership. Don't fall for the hype delivered in the last few years about blog-

ging being a revolution on the web, with every author a new journalist, contributing to a politically active global society – the vast majority of bloggers have remarkably little to say – but this accessibility does open doors for us. In a library setting, a blog is still seen as a fundamentally 'fringe' application, something a little experimental or flippant. Yet, at the University of Worcester, our student-focused house blog (ILS Matters<sup>2</sup>) is viewed by hundreds of our users daily, delivering news and information in a way which is simply unmatched by the traditional website. It's current, focused on delivering information at the time of year when it is most needed and, perhaps most importantly, it's relaxed, welcoming and even provocative when the mood takes.

The single biggest factor that makes ILS Matters a success here at Worcester is that it sounds deliberately like a human voice. Without resorting to amateur psychology, it's fairly easy to see that people respond to the style and, crucially, feel able to talk back. It seems to be, and is, actual communication. One person, feeling that the whole audience should know a particular piece of information they have come across, posts it in their own terms. They bring with them their own strengths and weaknesses, particularly in the field of grammar, but the readers at least know that somebody has explicitly tried to tell them something. Nothing to do with XML, web services or interoperability. Just one person with a platform, where they can tell others about the job that we do. Simple.

The 'alternative' nature of these systems also provides another benefit. As a blogger, I can post information in a style that just wouldn't be appropriate on a static web page. If we prefaced a page detailing our power-saving option on the library PCs with a picture of Frank the Pixie, first of all our web team would dismiss it out of hand, and consequently the article would be delivered in a formal style, remaining forever unread. Yet, ILS Matters is the second result in a Google search for ILS and 'University of Worcester'<sup>3</sup> so, as flippant and experimental as it may at first seem, it's one of our most effective marketing and information channels.

The potential and flexibility of blogging software has proven invaluable yet again in some of our other forays into the Web 2.0 world. If what we're essentially talking about is a tool for people to quickly and easily publish their thoughts, with a mechanism for others to respond, then the possibilities expand considerably. No project at Worcester is complete without an ongoing blog

to chart progress and solicit feedback. Why wait for monthly meetings to discuss the issues when anybody associated with the work can post in five minutes flat? Why run the risk of staff feeling alienated and 'in the dark' when a few lines a week can keep everyone informed? This is something that has proved hugely successful in Worcester's latest RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) project, giving all department members a say in the development of the service.<sup>4</sup> Don't make it the only method of communication, but it can be a remarkably efficient supplement.

Each of our desk services at Worcester also carries a blog, surpassing e-mail as a source of communication between those who work at those points and delivering a ready-made FAQ database<sup>5</sup> – a searchable point for those particularly blank moments. Once again, the human voice is key, making online conversations stream in multiple directions, with answers recorded for prosperity. Throw in a little RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and one blog ties to another, stretching that conversation to other interested parties.

So here's the suggestion. Blogging and other tools in the Web 2.0 stable are not the answer to every problem we've ever experienced at our institutions. They are fairly demanding creations, calling you to let your audience in on your information over and over. They are undeniably geeky to anyone who has never used one. Oh, and they are addictive. So addictive. Yet for all of this, they work undeniably well. If any of this sounds remotely interesting, just do one thing today. Create a blog (I'd try Wordpress.com as a starting point) and write one posting. If it does nothing for you, then forget it ever existed and move on. If, like me, you can think of a million and one ways to use them to ease information onto the desktops of your library's patrons, then write another post tomorrow. You won't stop there. And when the next tool comes along in this Web 2.0 wave, pick it up and use it – it's what they are there for, after all.

## REFERENCES

- 1 Technorati (<http://technorati.com/>) (accessed 26/03/2008)
- 2 ILS Matters (<http://www2.worc.ac.uk/wordpress>) (accessed 26/03/2008)
- 3 Google (<http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&q=ils+%22university+of+worchester%22&meta=>) (accessed 26/03/2008)
- 4 University of Worcester RFID Weblog (<http://uowrfid.wordpress.com/>) (accessed 26/03/2008)
- 5 (Too Many) Things to Remember (<http://issuedesk.wordpress.com/>) (accessed 26/03/2008); Student Support Team Blog (<http://uowstudentrecords.wordpress.com/>) (accessed 26/03/2008)

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# Blogging in the UK and Ireland

Compiled by:



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Last year I started writing a blog aimed at one of the departments I liaised with in my role as a subject librarian. Its purpose was simple – to keep students and staff informed about the new books that arrived in the library. As such, it was really just a modern version of the printed lists that librarians have always circulated, but the blog proved popular and generated some extremely enthusiastic feedback from academics.

I knew I couldn't be the only person doing this, but when I looked around it wasn't immediately apparent how widespread this use of blogs actually was. There were blogs written by librarians about librarianship, certainly, and research into the impact of Web 2.0 applications on our profession (for example the Libraries and Social Software in Education (LASSIE) investigation into the use of social software in education<sup>1</sup>, reported on elsewhere in this issue of *SCONUL Focus*), but actual examples of blogs used to communicate with library users seemed thin on the ground.

So earlier this year I posted a message on the *lis-infoliteracy* discussion list, asking for librarian bloggers to get in touch, and the response was striking. I received over forty replies and some of the respondents have contributed the short pieces that follow this introduction.

What was immediately clear is that British and Irish librarians are blogging a lot and have been doing so for some time. I wasn't a pioneer; indeed, the most common use of blogs is by subject librarians. But they are also being used to reach specific groups of library users (such as distance learners), to provide support for particular applications (EndNote or RefWorks) and to keep members informed about library projects (for example refurbishment, institutional repositories). Additionally they are a channel for the dissemination

of general library news although (as I write) they haven't yet supplanted the more conventional web page news sections. And, perhaps most interestingly, they are being used as a means of internal communication within libraries.

A number of common considerations were evident in the replies. A strong motive for setting up blogs is the belief that e-mail circulars tend to be ignored these days: blogs allow us to communicate directly with those library users who are interested in what we are doing. Blogs also give authors an autonomy and speed that traditional web pages (managed by the institution) cannot give; they also easily organise and archive information. There were comments about the tone of posts (informal or formal?), design and content, marketing and where blogs are hosted. Evidence that blogs are being read is also an important issue, with many bloggers tracking usage in various ways. All of these themes are explored in the case studies below.

What follows is not a scientific survey (probably impossible in such a fast-moving environment) but rather a snapshot of the sort of things that librarians are doing with blogs in 2008. It will be interesting to repeat this exercise in a couple of years to see how they have evolved or whether they've been replaced by some new form of communication we haven't yet thought of.

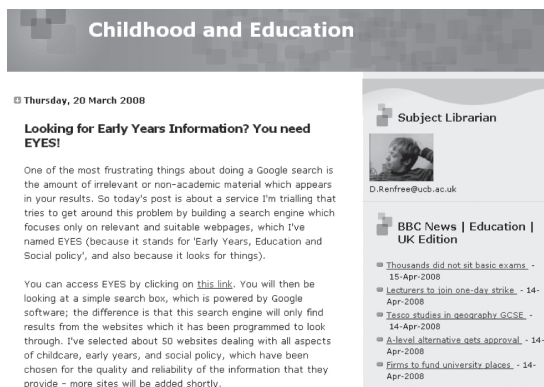
## **A SUBJECT LIBRARIAN BLOG AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE BIRMINGHAM**

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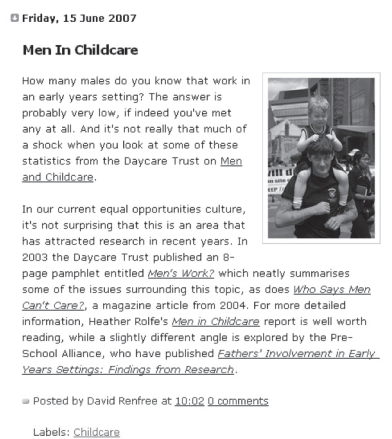
What's in a blog? That was the question the subject librarians at University College Birmingham asked themselves early last year, when a member of academic staff approached us to ask if we could set up some blogs for the benefit of lecturers and students throughout the institution. We wanted to explore how this method of communication could be utilised for our users, but were not entirely sure exactly what sort of information we should be looking to include.

This question appears to be ongoing, as each of us appears to have taken a slightly different approach to the sort of material that we cover. I am the subject librarian for the School of Child-

hood and Education at University College Birmingham, and my blog – <http://bcftcschildhoodeducation.blogspot.com> – contains details of newly published research and reports which are relevant to this area. It is updated on most weekdays, as the government’s focus on schemes such as Sure Start and the Children’s Plan means that there is currently a phenomenal amount of literature appearing in this sector.



I try to vary the content of the blog by introducing occasional ‘fun’ items on slow news days. The blog also contains a handful of simple internet / computing tips which users may find helpful. These are mainly written for the benefit of our large number of mature students, many of whom admit to having fairly basic IT skills, and are usually drawn from my own experience of the



difficulties that they encounter when using online information.

Fitting the blog into my workflow has been relatively seamless; much of the material that is highlighted comes to me from various e-mail alerts and RSS feeds that I’ve set up, or there are specialist news sources that I can skim quickly to get ideas. Most of the posts are relatively succinct, so it’s usually only a question of spending 15–20 minutes a day on updating the site.

All of our library blogs are hosted on Blogger, primarily because we wanted to set them up quickly, and our VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) had no blogging capability at that time. Links to the blogs are posted in various locations in our VLE and library catalogue, to maximise the chances that they will be looked at. We also get occasional hits from outsiders who have stumbled across the pages from a Web search.

A free plug-in piece of software called Statcounter gives us figures on how many hits our blogs are receiving, breakdowns on the numbers of new and returning users and much more; we chose Statcounter because it doesn’t require us to carry any advertising on the site. The number of hits the blogs receive tends to be at its highest during the early weeks of each semester, possibly as a result of the students being made aware of them during induction sessions.

Users are encouraged to leave comments, although they very rarely do, which is a little disappointing in terms of getting feedback. All comments also have to be moderated before they appear on the blog, to avoid publishing any material that might be deemed offensive. Anecdotal evidence from talking with users suggests that they are very happy with the service, but it would be useful to have something a little more formal in this area – something for the future perhaps?



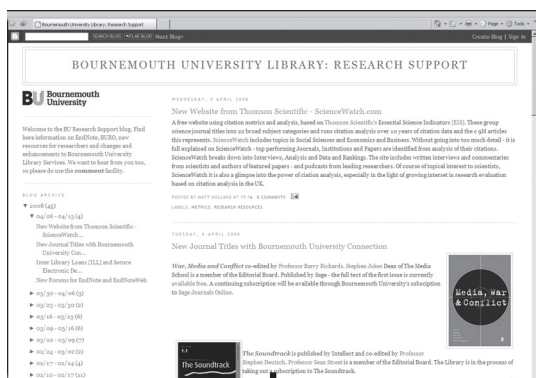
**BLOGGING IN A VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT  
BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY**

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Blogging at Bournemouth University Library has a relatively short but interesting history. The phased implementation in 2006/07 of BlackBoard as the platform for the university-wide VLE – myBU – provided the opportunity to use blogs as that facility was provided within BlackBoard.

Blogging on myBU got off to a tricky start because until some authentication issues had been sorted neither staff nor students could get access to it. However, since the technical issues underlying this problem were resolved, library staff – along with academics in the Schools – have been experimenting with different approaches.

Firstly, we wanted to make blogs personal as well as School-focused, so each blog is attributed – by first name – to the relevant subject librarian rather than just to the School or broad subject area. We have tried a range of writing styles: from the formal (such as 'Changes to Westlaw') and the reminder ('Forgotten your Athens password?') to the (hopefully) eye-catching ('Remember, remember the end of November' [for expiry of a database subscription] or 'What's your Verdict?' [news of the Verdict Research market research source]). As with all blogs, the perennial problem is adding new material. The best output is 22 entries over 6 months; 5 is the lowest. Do the students read them? Access to date has been promising, with

at least 100 views of each page over the last 6 months.

We have also since recognised that, while hosting a blog within a VLE has some advantages, especially for the majority of students who increasingly view myBU as their first point of contact – just a click from other pages on the VLE – it does have the disadvantages of (at present) limited management information and the need for an additional login. Also, because the VLE is necessarily password-protected, the blogs are not accessible to non-myBU users. So we are currently experimenting with using Blogger to provide a different access route, to allow for the different perspectives on how users connect with our resources. For example, blogs have been set up on Blogger to focus on those cross-disciplinary themes that are not easily accommodated within a School-based framework, including doctoral research, e-resource news and business and company information.

Our next step is first to enable access, from both the myBU (VLE) environment and the external-facing library web pages, to all the blogs. Secondly we will begin to actively promote their presence.

Using Blogger has allowed us to experiment with Google Analytics to monitor traffic on the Blogger-hosted offerings. This provides detailed usage analysis, for example of non-university users. Perhaps predictably, the external blogs over the period for which we have been measuring usage (25 February – 6 March 2008) have accrued 110+ hits from 92 visitors, with the average visit lasting just under 2 minutes.

While we cannot tell which access is good, bad or indifferent, we can at least measure the impact over time of various promotional activities through spikes in the usage data.

See <http://bulib4research.blogspot.com/>; <http://bulib4resources.blogspot.com/>; <http://bulib4businfo.blogspot.com/>.

## A NEW SUBJECT LIBRARIAN WRITES AT CITY UNIVERSITY!

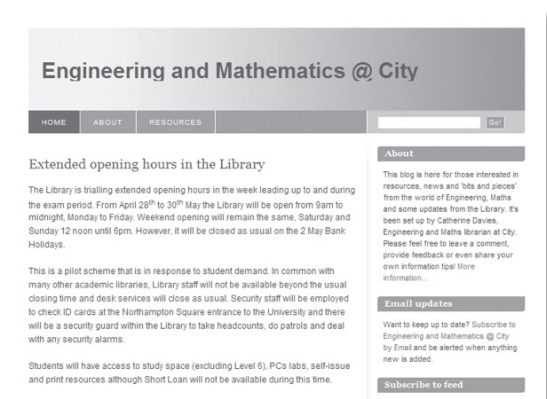
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Since August 2007 I have been maintaining a blog for the staff and students of City University's School of Engineering and Mathematics, available at <http://engineeringandmaths.wordpress.com>. There were so many reasons for setting up the blog that they far out-weighed my initial apprehension about blogging. As a brand new subject librarian in a brand new post, dealing with an unfamiliar subject in a new and untried format, it felt like it would be the equivalent of standing on a chair in a crowded room delivering a lecture about non-Euclidian geometry in Dutch. However, the need to establish a three-dimensional presence to staff and students was far greater than my fears.

I use my blog to communicate 'bits and pieces' of information to the School. At first, it was about library developments and new initiatives within the university, but very quickly it became a good way to record little nuggets of information I stumbled across: a relevant news story on engineering or maths, or an interesting resource I found about teaching. I didn't have a way to communicate these effectively through e-mail, as at the time I didn't have an e-mail list other than 'all engineering staff' and 'all maths staff'. Also, I was very aware that some people would not welcome the extra intrusion into their inbox, but that asking people to 'opt-out' of an e-mail list would be pointless – no-one would respond to that anyway! I also really wanted to get the message across about new technologies and new ways of using information – using the medium to deliver this information seemed to me quite a good method, as well as a way of becoming visible in the School.

I use a free blogging tool called Wordpress. My blog was started 'unofficially'. Call me cynical, but there didn't appear to be any blogs in the university as a whole when I set mine up and I decided that I would do it and see what happened, rather than ask permission of a faceless marketing department and have it turned down outright because it was the easier option. I advertise it in my e-mail signature, and recently took the momentous step of advertising it on the library website under my contact details. I also use it as the example of a blog in sessions I take with students looking at referencing and citing.

Overall I've had really positive feedback from other liaison librarians and others within the library; no-one else has started one yet, though this could be changing in the near future with increasing interest in Web 2.0 technologies amongst library staff. This could be down to the fact that it's not in the 'established repertoire' of our roles, or perhaps to uncertainty about the technology. I think one of the easiest excuses is that people don't have time; however, I don't really buy that – it is a very good use of time for a liaison librarian, in my opinion! Once the blog is set up, updating is as quick as writing an e-mail (with a bit more thought, obviously, as the world is reading, potentially!): a quick scan of feeds I've signed up to, most days, and if something catches my eye – in it goes. The work really was in setting it up, getting the right 'look' and applications and over time adding the sources I wanted to keep an eye on in my own reader.

In terms of the impact in the intended audience, I've had good anecdotal feedback. Wordpress does provide some basic stats, so I can see that I've had around 1,000 hits since August 2007, although my mother is very proud of me and apparently always has a look every few days, so I can take a few off for that! Wordpress doesn't give you information on those subscribed to your RSS feed, which is a bit of a shame, since that might give a more realistic picture of its use in the School. I hope that it will continue to be read and grow its audience slowly, but if nothing else it has been a very worthwhile personal exercise in getting to grips with new technologies and also in my own professional development, keeping myself up to date and learning more about the subjects I support. If others find it of use as well, then that's even better!

## BLOGGING TO PROMOTE SITE LIBRARIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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Blogs in Oxford are still very much in their infancy, but over the last few months a lot of interest has taken off here about Web 2.0 tools and how they could be useful in libraries. I set up a blog for the Vere Harmsworth Library (Rothermere American Institute) in October 2007 (<http://vereharmsworthlibrary.blogspot.com/>), as part of a wider experiment into Web 2.0 tools (we have also been trying out del.icio.us, Facebook, LibraryThing, Instant Messaging and wikis). My aim in doing so was to find a better way of managing publishing and distribution of library news. I had been finding our old news page on our website cumbersome to maintain (manual archiving, no feeds) and having to publish news multiple times in multiple places was time-consuming. Replacing this page with a blog simplified the whole process as everything is done automatically – feeds, archiving, searching and labelling features for browsing, ability to get feedback through comments. It also allows for the same piece of news to be published in multiple locations – the feed is routed onto our library website on the front page (using the ‘shared items’ feature in Google Reader) and onto our Facebook page (via an RSS application), and of course goes directly to anyone who subscribes. Statistics are being monitored with Site Meter and FeedBurner, both showing healthy usage, and we have received quite a few positive comments from readers. Our blog is externally hosted, using Blogger; initially I was concerned that having it separate from our website might mean news would be lost, but unfortunately our current CMS (Content Management System) didn’t allow closer integration. However, routing the feed through to the front page has negated this and means it has become a very effective way of distributing information.

Since I began the VHL blog, a couple of other librarians have been inspired to try them out. Despite being a self-confessed ‘Web 2.0 sceptic’, Sue Pemberton at the Continuing Education library set up a blog to try and improve communication with readers, particularly distance learners. She has found it easy to set up and maintain, also finding that the ease of doing so encourages her to update it more frequently than she would have the website. An additional benefit has been the

way the blog has raised the profile of the library within the department, as news items of interest from the feed are picked up on the department’s news page as well. Gillian Beattie at St Stephen’s House library has also started a library blog, both as a means of distributing news and also to give the library a web presence of its own, as it previously didn’t have a website. She was attracted by the flexibility of blogs over websites, particularly by the ease with which she could embed extra items such as widgets from del.icio.us and LibraryThing (which I have also done with the VHL blog). Like Sue, Gillian has found blogging a very easy way to communicate with readers and to raise the profile of the library within the institution. Both Sue and Gillian are also using Blogger for their blogs.

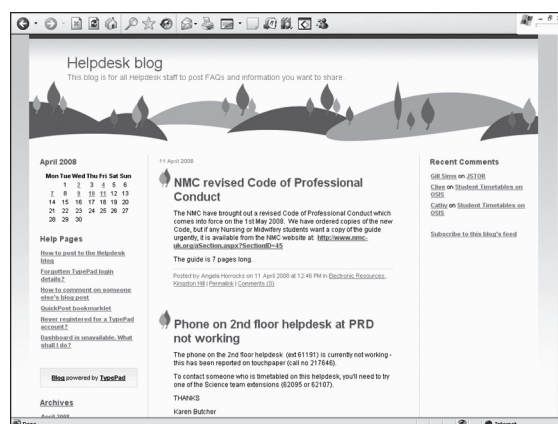
Interest in Web 2.0 is really taking off in Oxford, and on 27 March 2008 a study day was held for library staff from all over the university. This included presentations and case studies, but also hands-on sessions where librarians could try out some tools for themselves. As part of this everyone was encouraged to create blogs, both to demonstrate how easy it is and also to have some way of recording people’s impressions and thoughts throughout the day. It will be interesting to see whether, following this, more librarians here are inspired to start blogs for their libraries or subject areas.

## A BLOG FOR LIBRARY STAFF AT KINGSTON UNIVERSITY: THE HELPDESK BLOG

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We run an active blog for all staff working on helpdesks. Although it is not aimed directly at students, the blog is still intended to improve our communication with them by being better

informed ourselves about current issues affecting service.

Kingston University has four libraries on different sites, offering a range of reception desks and general and subject helpdesks at each. These are staffed by a mixture of subject specialists, customer services assistants and other information advisors. Staff may be rostered at different times each day/week according to other commitments; some staff are part-time and only work on certain days.

Our problem was how to communicate new information about service issues fast but only to the staff who needed to know it. The type of information we were thinking of might include news on availability of resources, support for particular groups of students, network and printing problems, machines, site and environmental issues, reminders about surveys and new services. E-mails were unsatisfactory because (a) although they could be sent quickly, it could not be guaranteed that staff on helpdesks were logged into their e-mail and reading the messages straightaway and (b) even a 'helpdesk staff' distribution list would still reach staff who were not timetabled that day, who were on leave or who didn't work that day, thereby clogging up their inboxes with unnecessary and irrelevant mail. Some information might be useful to staff at all sites; some might only be relevant on one particular site.

Keen to embrace Web 2.0 technologies, a blog seemed a possible solution: accessible from any computer and open to all staff to add information, comments and updates or simply to view. We jumped in with a subscription to TypePad and very quickly had our blog designed – [http://cathymurr.typepad.co.uk/helpdesk\\_blog/](http://cathymurr.typepad.co.uk/helpdesk_blog/) – and ready to go. All staff were invited to register to enable them to post to the blog and it was at this point that we encountered most of our teething problems; the idea was new, the technology was unfamiliar, it was another thing to have to learn how to do. However, once the first wave of staff were registered and had begun using the blog actively, interest outweighed fear and more staff took the plunge. Even without registering, though, the blog is still available to all helpdesk staff to read (it is set to open automatically for all users on helpdesk computers).

The blog was launched in January 2007; the fact that it is still going strong is testament to its value as an internal communication tool.

## SEVEN BLOGS AT DUBLIN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY!

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Dublin Institute of Technology library has developed seven blogs since February 2007, using blogger.com software. These can be viewed on the DIT library website at <http://www.dit.ie/DIT/library/az/blogs/>.

Each blog has been developed locally by the respective faculty library and reflects the interests of same. They have evolved into two distinct types which reflect their purpose, although this is subject to review and change. Four are explicitly faculty- and subject-oriented, namely DIT Kevin St's Science blog, DIT Bolton St's Engineering and Built Environment blogs and DIT Cathal Brugha St's Tourism blog. These blogs provide updated subject-news resources as well as information-literacy-related subject links and e-tutorials. The remaining two are site-library-information-oriented (DIT Mountjoy Square, DIT Aungier Street) and the final DIT Library Services blog consists of general cross-library updates.

Some of these blogs have been in operation for awhile (Engineering since February 07 and Science and Aungier St since summer 07) while others are newer (Mountjoy Square and Tourism & Food).

A number of blog-related themes have evolved since their inception, namely currency and content, contributors, evaluation and rationale. Amongst the common operational issues are blog update frequency, audience, the need to moderate comments, being design-aware, maintaining contributor and reader interest, text and image copyright awareness, in addition to general post quality. Some blogs are updated more than twice a week, depending on the subject area, while others are updated less frequently. Contributors are generally the staff of each faculty library, but authoring and contributory rights are confined to their site blog only. In reality it tends to be one or two staff members of each site library who are the primary contributors, each with their own style and expertise. There is currently co-contribution between the Science and Engineering blogs. There is also the issue of up-skilling staff who would like to be involved but who don't have the necessary skills to contribute or author their site blog.

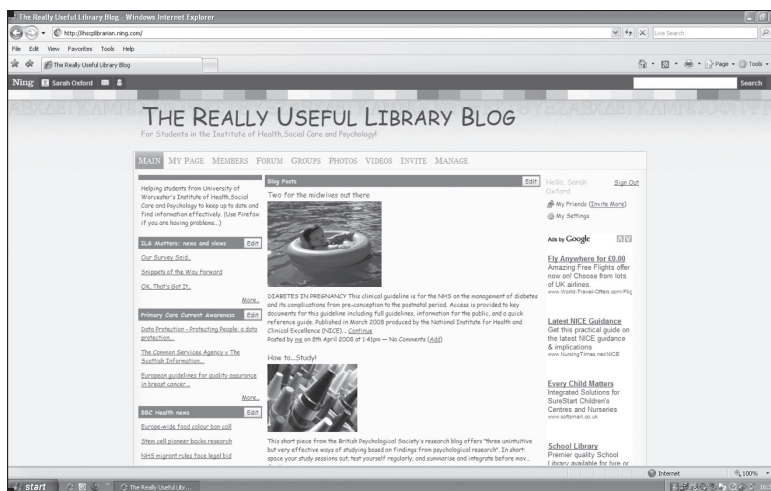
Deciding what constitutes useful information and the right blog-posting 'tone' can be difficult at times, but a mix of formal and informal posts seems to work well and a balance can be achieved with various contributor styles. Design changes and major content changes are usually reached by library-staff site-team consensus. RSS feeds have been found to be useful in terms of current awareness and obtaining potential post material. The links area on the blogs provide another access route to DIT library's e-resources and services for staff and students, which is the common rationale across the seven blogs.

The blogs are publicised via the DIT library website, via information-literacy classes and posters and multimedia tools. The libraries keep track of traffic reports for each blog, but would obviously like more feedback in regard to their relevance and use. They are evaluated reasonably regularly and the staff are aware of the need for them to be a consistent and quality presence in the Web 2.0 arena.

Finally there is also a new DIT library information literacy blog for librarian-teachers across the DIT library sites to share learning and teaching news and e-resources: <http://www.dit.ie/DIT/library/az/blogs/>.

#### BLOGGING USING NING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WORCESTER

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The idea for a subject-specific library blog arose from a desire to create a dialogue between students in University of Worcester's Institute of

Health, Social Care and Psychology (IHSCP), and their liaison librarian. This blog – <http://ihscplibrarian.ning.com/> – is intended not only for students based on campus but also those based at partner institutions. At present, students contact me through the enquiries desk, by telephone or by e-mail, but these methods rely on students coming to me. I wanted to find a way to approach them.



I have used the social network 'Ning', as it includes many features that enable me to offer information and communicate with users. I regularly update a blog to keep students informed on the latest news and resources relevant to them. I have added news (RSS) feeds which update daily, offering reports, guidelines and news from relevant fields. I have created some discussion boards where students can put forward their queries and suggestions. These have not been used yet, but students have contacted me using the personal message facility, to make the odd stock suggestion or query about stock availability. I hope that they will ask their questions in the chat forum so that we can build up a 'bank' of queries, suggestions and responses; however, I realise students may be reluctant to get the ball rolling here.

I am very fortunate to have the support of my colleagues within information and learning services when it comes to promotion. I started off by promoting the blog to academic staff, asking them to mention it to students. I sent e-mails to students where I already had their details from previous communications. I added the link to all handouts and presentations used in my teaching sessions, and it is in my e-mail signature. I also received offers from colleagues to put the web address on the front page of the catalogue, to add it to appropriate modules on Blackboard (the university VLE), and to add a link on the IHSCP departmental web page, which students are known to visit regularly

for information on their course, placements and timetables. I have tried to get students visiting the site and signing up as an activity in my teaching sessions, although I have made this more of an 'optional extra' as students can get overwhelmed with too much information, particularly at the start of their course.

Keeping the site up-to-date does not add significantly to my workload, though it is very important to set aside time for it regularly each week. No one reads a quiet blog! The news feeds update automatically so that there is always something new on there. There have been one or two comments made to me via personal messages where I have had to respond tactfully, perhaps where students are doing things they ought not to be doing or where I have to justify why we can't buy a particular book. I realise that it may be more difficult to respond to similar comments in the public discussion forums!

The blog was up and running in time for new and returning students in January 2008. Since then, only 24 people have signed up, though many more have viewed the site; the content can be viewed without having to sign up. In mid-February 2008, the statistics offered by 'Ning' said that there had been over 1,600 views (not all of these will necessarily be Worcester students), though this feature has now been removed and 'Ning' users are advised to add Google Analytics to their pages. This should give much more detailed information about site usage. There is much more work to be done with the blog, and I do sometimes worry that it is one online resource too far ... but it is important to persevere. You never know until you try!

#### **SCIENCE AND HEALTH NEWS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BATH**

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Background: Various subject librarians have been blogging at the University of Bath since 2005. The trend was initiated by Kara Jones' creation of

'Science News'. Kara's rationale for blogging is presented within the 'About us' section of 'Science News':

The aim is to provide a place for us to disseminate library information to our departments, and to provide an opportunity, usually via comments, for people to feedback to us ... Sometimes we'll share our thoughts on a particular matter and invite responses.

*Content:* Sarah Hughes has inherited 'Science News' and Peter Bradley writes 'Health News'. Both Sarah and Peter alert readers to resources that are on trial or recently acquired. Sarah also provides reminders about existing resources and seeks recommendations for new books.

*Currency:* Sarah posts as and when she thinks of something pertinent, while also aiming to blog once per week. Regularity is important; if users repeatedly find nothing new to read, they may stop visiting. However, the 'About us' section seeks to manage their expectations by stating that 'posting occurs intermittently'. On average, Peter blogs at least twice per month, usually adding clusters of stories at a time.

*Style:* When Sarah began posting to 'Science News', she found it a slightly unnerving means of communication and, therefore, would write a couple of drafts first. Sarah now finds it to be a quick, easy and enjoyable way to promote the library's resources and services. Students have responded positively to her informal style. Peter has started to adopt this approach as he aims to encourage greater two-way communication.

*Hosting services:* Peter employs Blogspot whereas Sarah uses Wordpress. Both have user-friendly interfaces and blogger-friendly functionality. Tags are employed to enable searching. Peter and Sarah aim to be consistent and intuitive when creating and selecting tags.

*Promotion:* The blogs are promoted during some library inductions and Peter has added links to them from within subject-specific sections of the library website. Sarah e-mails links to specific stories in the form of 'headlines', enabling the busy academic to discriminate between stories rather than having to scroll laboriously down the screen. Both librarians actively invite comments, though users rarely respond via the blogs, which undermines their full interactive potential. Nonetheless, this approach hopefully encourages the reader to

perceive librarians as approachable and interested in what they have to say.

*Usage:* In addition to positive anecdotal evidence, usage statistics prove that the blogs are being read. Both blogs experience boosts in numbers of visits after summaries of content are emailed or posted via virtual learning environments. However, these figures do not tell us whether individuals from specific user-groups are less inclined to visit than others. This information could help provide a focus for future promotional activities.

*Conclusion:* Subject librarians at the University of Bath employ different approaches to blogging but share the same challenges. The most important of these is to realise the full potential of blogs as promotional and social tools through additional means of publicity.

See <http://www.bath.ac.uk/library/subjects/blogs.html>.

#### REFERENCE

- 1 Available at <http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Projects/LASSIE.php>

#### OTHER BLOGS

University of East London: <http://uellibraryava.blogspot.com/>  
Imperial College: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/library/aboutthelibrary/news/blogs>  
UCD: <http://www.ucd.ie/library/about/blogs/index.html>  
University of Huddersfield: <http://library.hud.ac.uk/blogs/>  
Newcastle University: <http://library.hud.ac.uk/blogs/>  
Open University: <http://library.open.ac.uk/services/lib20servs/blogs/index.cfm>  
Queen's University Belfast: <http://qubrefworks.jiscinvolve.org/>  
Glasgow School of Art: [http://www2.gsa.ac.uk/library/news/news\\_index.html](http://www2.gsa.ac.uk/library/news/news_index.html)  
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Coventry University: <http://covendnote.blogspot.com/>  
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Coleg Llandrillo: <http://liberace.wordpress.com/>  
University of Loughborough: <http://lborossh.wordpress.com/>

Cardiff University: <http://dlsduthie.wordpress.com/>  
Sheffield Hallam University: <http://shu-lits-hwbteam.blogspot.com/>  
SUNCAT: <http://suncatblog.blogspot.com/>  
UCL: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/blog/>  
University of Bradford: <http://eresourcesatbradford.wordpress.com/>  
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[all accessed, April 2008]

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# LASSIE (Libraries and Social Software in Education): project overview and key findings



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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The LASSIE (Libraries and Social Software in Education) project was led by the Centre for Learning Technology at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and the University of London Institute of Education. This nine-month project (funded by University of London Centre for Distance Education Teaching and Research Awards) ran from March 2007 to December 2007 and explored how social software might enhance the distance learner's experience of libraries. The project was extremely timely and gained a lot of publicity in the library community. Members of the steering group were invited to speak at numerous conferences and events and their experiences have gone on to inform developments in the partner institutions. This short paper provides an overview of the project and the key findings.

The project's steering group was chaired by Gwyneth Price from the Institute of Education and included staff at from the University of London Research Library Services, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Open University and colleagues from the Library and Archives at LSE.

LASSIE publications and reports were completed in February 2008 and made available on the project website (<http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Projects/LASSIE.php>) and via the project blog (<http://elearning.lse.ac.uk/blogs/socialsoftware/>). The

case-study reports attracted wide interest from the library community because they explore practical applications of social software. The extensive literature review was published as a draft in July 2007 and updated in January 2008. Feedback has suggested that its value goes beyond the project team and it is scheduled for publication in the journal *Program* later in 2008.

## THE LITERATURE REVIEW

At the outset of the project it was agreed to undertake a detailed literature review to gain a snapshot of social software initiatives in the library community, to review current issues in distance learning librarianship and to examine the literature on libraries as social spaces. Our research found that the phenomenon known sometimes as 'Web 2.0' has received a lot of publicity in the mainstream media recently. In addition the library world is full of people exploring how social software might be used to enhance their services. However, at the outset of the project the team felt it was important to provide some definitions for the library community. Terms such as 'Web 2.0' and 'Library 2.0' are being used with increased frequency and definitions were considered helpful. For this reason the literature review also examined different types of social software (such as blogs, wikis, RSS feeds and social bookmarking tools) and provided definitions and examples of how libraries are using these tools and services. The draft literature review (Secker, 2007) and the updated literature review (Secker, 2008) are both available on the project website.

To briefly summarise some of the work in the literature review, LASSIE found that librarians have become keen bloggers and in the USA (and to a lesser extent in the UK) libraries are using blogs for news information and to reach out to their users; see for example Kansas State University library blogs (<http://ksulib.typepad.com/>). An example of a UK university using blogs is the University of Worcester, where they launched ILS Matters (<http://www2.worc.ac.uk/wordpress/>) to raise the profile of their library services to students. Worcester is also using blogs to reach out to the academic staff and for internal communication purposes amongst library staff. We felt that blogging was of particular interest and decided to focus one of the case studies on the role of blogging in libraries. This was partly based on our own experiences of running a blog for the duration of the project. The LASSIE project blog (<http://elearning.lse.ac.uk/blogs/socialsoftware/>) proved to be a valuable way of document-



ing the progress of the project, of reflecting on what the team were doing and also of publicising the project. The blog developed a solid readership throughout the project and it continues to be maintained.

Another important technology that was explored as part of the LASSIE project was RSS feeds (sometimes called Really Simple Syndication). RSS underpins many Web 2.0 technologies and is a dialect of XML (Extensible Markup Language). Put simply, it is a machine-readable language, much like HTML, designed to provide a framework in which information can be contained. News information is particularly useful when provided in RSS format because, rather than having to visit a website to see what's new, a reader can be continuously kept updated by subscribing to a feed. Libraries in the USA, in particular, are encouraging their users to subscribe to a variety of RSS feeds to keep up to date with library news, the latest acquisitions to the library catalogue and new electronic resources. For example, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Libraries maintain a list of RSS feeds (<http://libraries.mit.edu/help/rss/feeds.html>) that is available from their site. Meanwhile, closer to home, London School of Economics and Political Science has developed a training portal (<http://www.training.lse.ac.uk/>) that uses RSS technology to pull together training events from around the institution. The RSS feed has also been incorporated into the VLE, Moodle and the institutional portal to provide a list of upcoming training events for staff and students. The Open University is another example of a library using RSS feeds to keep people up to date with library developments (<http://library.open.ac.uk/services/lib20servs/rssfeed/index.cfm>).

The inclusion of 'user generated content' (such as ratings, book reviews and user comments) into the catalogue has been implemented in several libraries. For some this is seen as challenging or revolutionary since many librarians view the library catalogue as an authoritative source that should be maintained. For some examples of libraries including user generated content in the catalogue, see Hennepin County Library (<http://catalog.hclib.org/>) and the University of Huddersfield (<http://webcat.hud.ac.uk/>), which are now allowing students to rate books. Huddersfield also uses features similar to those employed by Amazon, which suggests titles to borrowers based on the user data. So, for example, the catalogue now includes the feature 'users who borrowed this book, also borrowed ...'. Arguably, this initiative gives the user a better experience when

using the catalogue, making it more similar to the online shopping experience they are invariably more familiar with.

The LASSIE literature review (Secker, 2008) provides details of many other social software initiatives in libraries, such as the use of media-sharing sites and social bookmarking tools. The review also includes shorter sections on current issues in distance learning librarianship and the role of the library as a social space. The overall sense was that finding and accessing resources still forms one of the greatest challenges for distance learning students and that information literacy initiatives are essential to support students who are studying remotely. In terms of the library as a social space, it was clear that physical libraries are very much becoming social learning spaces. However, the case study on Facebook in particular suggested that students still have some reservations about mixing their social and learning spaces in the online environment.

#### **THE CASE STUDIES**

The LASSIE team undertook five case studies to explore how particular tools might enhance the learning experience of real distance learning students. These are available from the project website: <http://clt.lse.ac.uk/Projects/LASSIE.php>.

Case study one explored whether traditional reading lists can be improved using social software. The project team explored the use of four online reading-list or book-list systems including: CiteULike (<http://www.citeulike.org/>), H20 Playlists (<http://h20beta.law.harvard.edu/home.do>), LibraryThing (<http://www.librarything.com>) and Bibsonomy (<http://www.bibsonomy.org/>) to present reading-list information to students on a University of London distance learning course. CiteULike and H20 Playlists were clear preferences following feedback from students; however, social software reading lists don't currently integrate with library catalogues, making them useful for presenting information to students but less useful for librarians.

Meanwhile case study two explored the social bookmarking tool del.icio.us (<http://del.icio.us/>) to collect useful resources for the project, but also as a way of directing students to web-based resources. Several institutions in the USA and Australia have developed web-based subject guides using del.icio.us. The research concluded that this tool is extremely flexible and can be easily incorporated into institutional or personal

websites. Stanford University has an excellent example of how this can be used by library subject specialists to direct students to relevant resources (see (<https://www.stanford.edu/group/ic/cgi-bin/drupal/delicious>). Members of the project team also used this tool with different groups of students and collected some feedback that suggested it was valuable both as a tool for librarians and also for students.

Case study three focused on information-literacy support for distance learners and produced a citing and referencing screencast. Using the Camtasia software, a training session with audio and screen capture was prepared. A menu system allows students to pick and choose how they access the material. They can view the presentation from start to finish, but are free to jump about using the menu. Feedback was gathered from students on the role of online training, or 'podcasts', in delivering training and in general students concluded they would like more online support but they would also like to be able to attend face-to-face classes for the interaction they provide. The resource is available on the library website at LSE: [http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/inskr/citing\\_referencing.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/inskr/citing_referencing.htm).

The fourth case study explored libraries and blogging and is briefly mentioned in the section above. It provides good-practice guidance for librarian bloggers and discusses the set-up, maintenance and role of several different blogs. The final case study looked at the role of the social networking site Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>) as a tool for librarians and for library services. This case study was largely literature-based, although it also drew on the experiences of project team members who had joined Facebook. It includes some good-practice guidance for librarians using Facebook, as well as highlighting library-related applications in Facebook. It concluded that social networking tools are clearly hugely popular with the Google generation and many libraries are keen to explore how they might be used to promote their services.

## CONCLUSION

LASSIE's adventures ceased in January 2007 and a final report was submitted to the Centre for Distance Education. The project provided the team with a wealth of valuable experience and knowledge about social software. In addition, the real-life examples of using social software with students and the feedback that we have gathered provides timely evidence for the library

community, as many are considering whether or how to use social software. The project steering group met for a final review of LASSIE in February 2008 and the members hope that what they have learnt can continue to be disseminated through presentations and ideally through some hands-on training events for librarians. The team were clear that distance learners studying at the University of London do need additional support to access and use library resources. Using the virtual learning environment, Moodle and social software initiatives, several members of the team hope to develop appropriate information-literacy resources for students by building on LASSIE's experiences. The project blog will be maintained for the foreseeable future and the team are considering other possible funding opportunities.

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# Reflections in Wonderland

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## INTRODUCTION

Second Life (SL) is a 3D virtual world created by Linden Research Inc. in 2003. It now has over 10 million resident avatars and its own currency, the Linden dollar. Library activity there includes the Info Islands archipelago where there are re-creations of many US and some UK libraries. Some educational institutions have also bought their own islands.

Our explorations of SL were undertaken as one part of a project looking at the library's use of Moodle, the university's virtual learning environment (VLE) and the longer-term possibilities offered by SL and other 3D virtual worlds. We also want to explore the possibilities offered by linking Moodle and SL via the mash-up, Sloodle.

Our reflections go back over the last year to March 2007 when our second lives began.

## LEARNING TO FLY AND OTHER NEW SKILLS

In accessing SL from work we initially encountered IT barriers but, thanks to helpful colleagues, these were overcome. The first barrier we encountered was that the university firewall blocked access completely, and this had to be reconfigured to allow the project staff access. We then found that, although we had access, we were unable to teleport. We sent an unlikely looking e-mail request to an IT colleague for 'help with teleporting please!' that very promptly led to a

further tweak to the firewall. Access has now been extended to all university staff.

On first exploring SL we discovered that some considerable skills development was required for us to feel confident in living and working in a virtual world. Apparently simple things such as creating and dressing your avatar, moving around (which can be done by walking, flying and teleporting), climbing stairs and even sitting down can all be problematic, and it's not possible to participate fully until these skills are developed.

This can make early experiences of SL particularly frustrating.

In addition, there are also further higher-level skills involved in taking part in social interactions in a virtual world and adjustments that have to be made in expectations. Some real-life social norms carry over – for example, not sitting or standing too close to another avatar – but in other ways SL has different norms. Various factors tend to have a disinhibiting effect on behaviour: the relative anonymity, the lack of physical risk, the ability to easily alter your avatar's appearance and gender and the 'new frontier' atmosphere.

For 'Wynne' the initial orientation was made a little easier due to her typist's previous experience of text-based virtual worlds. This began with a visit to IPL Moo – part of the internet public library at the University of Michigan, and one of the first virtual reference services – as long ago as 1997. She also has experience of 3D adventure games such as *Zork* and *Myst*, and the skills learned in these have proved to be largely transferable. As another way of developing skills she found it useful to create a second avatar or 'alt' with which to explore the more social and playful aspects of SL.

'Merry's typist's prior experience was totally different, consisting of only a few visits to the Church of Fools – a 3D virtual church sponsored by the Methodist Church which was open from May until September 2004 – before joining the SL community. The initial orientation phase has therefore taken much longer for her and may still be continuing.

We have realised that we cannot fix a definite time scale of how long it takes to become orientated within SL. For 'Wynne' there were fewer new skills to learn. For 'Merry', it felt that it took forever before moving became more natural – sitting

down, in particular, and landing gracefully after flying have proved difficult skills to conquer.

#### WHAT CAN WE DO IN HERE?

On exploring SL we found that our preconceptions about what we might do in there soon had to be revised. Initially, we had assumed that we would want to create a library building, a virtual equivalent of our physical library building, possibly with certain added extra features along the lines of the alternative library developed by one of the authors in partnership with a colleague in 2000.<sup>1</sup> Our experience has led us to reconsider whether this would be the most appropriate way to go. Simply creating a building and adding content to it would not, we feel, be making full use of the potential of this new world, and it may not even be necessary.

It may, though, have potential as a 'safe' way for those who suffer from library anxiety to explore the library building in SL and so become used to the actual university library before dealing with it in reality. This may be important to some students. In the book *Alter ego: avatars and their creators*,<sup>2</sup> a student is quoted as saying that 'The barrier of not being face-to-face with people helped', and we need to be aware of this.

It might be possible to combine these approaches by creating the frontage of the building so that those who have visited it in SL will recognise the same building in the real world and feel more confident in entering it. While the inside of the building need not exactly mirror the real-life building, it would be possible to create an approximation of where the different areas of the library are, without the physical world's constraints such as doors and stairs.

The elements we have found to be vital to success in SL are the presence of people, interactive events and real-time synchronous communication. Fundamentally it is a social space, a place where people meet. We have observed a tendency for people to gravitate to other people, rather than to places or to information points.

The reference desk on Info Island acts especially as a focal point for librarians, attracting quite a crowd at times (usually in the afternoon and evening because of the number of US librarians who are actively involved) and this seems to be because it is out in the open and regularly staffed. Many of the more impressive library buildings – most of which have content but no staff, or staff-

ing only at limited times – attract only occasional, usually lone visitors, unless there is an event or exhibition.

While exploring alone helps with the practical skills of moving around, the opportunity to network with other librarians and the subsequent exchange of ideas is one of the main benefits of SL to us so far. Without meeting others and socializing, it is not easy to see all the possibilities provided by virtual worlds. Talking and sparking ideas off each other has been fun and informative.

Taking part in courses and attending meetings in SL gave us further opportunities to observe how learning and teaching operate there. In 2007 we took part in two online courses on 'Librarianship in virtual worlds' provided by the University of Illinois. These courses comprised six-weekly two-hour classes, each held in SL, along with VLE facilities provided via Moodle. This gave us the opportunity to experience being students in a virtual world and VLE, as well as providing valuable course material on how SL is being used by libraries and educators.

Attending classes in SL and taking part in the course via Moodle were very different experiences. The SL classes were intense and immersive, particularly when they involved visits to exhibits or manipulation of virtual objects, and discussions by course members were lively and wide-ranging in class sessions, much more so than in-between classes in the online forums. It was much harder to arrive late for a class or leave it early than it was to log in and out of a forum and the fact that you have a visible presence in SL makes it difficult to lurk and take no active part, as so many people do in online chat sessions and discussion forums. It was also necessary to pay attention in class because the avatars slump their head and shoulders after a certain period of inactivity, giving a clear visual signal of their typists' attentiveness, or lack of it!

Using the VLE in conjunction with the SL class gave an opportunity to look back on the class discussion and to ask questions again afterwards. While we were in SL at the same time as others on the course, we never 'chatted' in real time with anyone in the VLE, owing to the different real-world time-zones.

It was interesting that neither element would have been complete without the other and each added a different perspective to the learning that took place within each course.

## IS SECOND LIFE THE WAY FORWARD?

The often frustrating nature of the SL interface is evident to all who take part in it. Even experienced residents find there is a comic tendency to bump into things and other avatars, and to sit in inappropriate places. Ad Agency DRAFTFCB caught the look and feel of the SL imperfections perfectly in its video, available via YouTube.<sup>3</sup>

With all its limitations, however, SL is currently the most successful virtual world in terms of both the numbers of people taking part and of the high-profile organizations, such as IBM and Reuters, that are establishing a presence in-world. When we checked on 5 March 2008 we found that 1,347,560 avatars had been active in SL during the last 60 days. Given the social nature of virtual worlds, and the fact that participation can help to develop skills that are transferable to other virtual worlds, it seems to be the place to be at the moment.

While SL may not be the perfect platform in the long term, the general trend of online activity is towards real-time connection and social interaction. With the growth of social networking and integrated Web 2.0 applications we increasingly go online in order to make contact with others and interact with them.

A recent report by the Centre for Information Behaviour and the Evaluation of Research suggests that students are spending more time working online in this type of virtual social space than visiting either physical library buildings or traditional library websites,<sup>4</sup> and we need to find ways to be present in this new type of online world and to develop the skills appropriate to working within it.

### NEXT STEPS

University courses are increasingly delivered in a blended-learning mode, with more use being made of the various facilities offered by the VLE, and it may be possible to integrate virtual worlds into this, for example by means of the Sloodle mash-up between Moodle and SL.

What virtual worlds have to offer here is a sense of presence, as described by Lombard and Ditton in their paper 'At the heart of it all: the concept of presence',<sup>5</sup> which notes that it is a key factor in student engagement with online learning, both in terms of telepresence – being there – and of social presence – being there with others. This could

change the experience of blended or distance learning from one where learners and teachers can sometimes feel disconnected and isolated from one another to one of being involved in an active online learning community.

In the remaining time our project has to run we would like to develop some kind of library presence in SL, although we are as yet unsure of exactly what form this should take. Staff and students in the university are just beginning to experiment with SL and we would hope to have a visible presence there, as we do on the real-world campus.

Just as a VLE is, or can be, much more than a repository for lecture notes, a virtual world has the potential to be much more than a three-dimensional version of a website, but exactly what we do in there is something that can only develop through experiment and experience and in collaboration with the academic staff within our own university and with other librarians worldwide.

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# Portals, A to Z, OPAC: how best to provide access to our resources



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## INTRODUCTION

It has been well documented and much discussed that the landscape of library collection development has shifted significantly in the past ten years with an explosion in the number of e-resources available to libraries and a dramatic shift in the proportion of library collections that are in electronic rather than print format. In particular, Irish universities have faced an unprecedented and sudden increase in the titles available to them electronically because of the IReL initiative.

IReL, the Irish Research electronic Library, is an initiative, centrally funded by Science Foundation Ireland and the Higher Education Authority, to provide researchers in Irish universities with access to the information resources they need online. The project has been carried out in two phases to date: the IReL STM (Scientific, Technical and Medical) phase has provided our users with online access to over 3,000 journal titles in science, technology and medicine, while the IReL HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences) phase has provided access to over 25,000 titles in the humanities and social sciences online. This has caused a very dramatic shift in the balance of library journal collections to a predominantly electronic format.

## PROVIDING ACCESS TO E-RESOURCES

The problem facing libraries is how best to provide access to these resources. We have of course a well-tried and tested method of keeping users abreast of the resources we make available, that is via the library catalogue. However, the huge number of titles coming onstream in such a short

period of time via IReL has brought into sharp relief the challenge faced when attempting to apply existing resources and methods to the problem of providing access to e-resources. 'E-journal publishing has outstripped the library's ability to keep up with it using traditional cataloguing methods.'<sup>1</sup>

Cataloguing staff in NUI Galway, for example, catalogued an average of just over 1,000 records per month in the 2005/06 academic year, the majority of this constituting copy cataloguing. Taking this available cataloguing resource into account, it is clear that even if the full cataloguing resource had been diverted to IReL it would still have taken three months to catalogue every title available via the IReL STM phase alone. The IReL HSS phase would have required a further 20 months. Obviously, this was not an option. Thus it is clear that staffing resources are simply not available to libraries to catalogue e-journals on a title-by-title basis within a time frame that is acceptable to our users. As far back as 1999, a CONSER (Cooperative Online Serials) survey of libraries reported lack of staff time as the biggest obstacle to the cataloguing and maintenance of e-journal titles.<sup>2</sup>

Even if records were to be created for e-journals, ongoing maintenance of those records is no less of a problem. Anyone who has worked in serials a long time knows of the 'well-documented (and oft-lamented) variability of traditional print serials'.<sup>3</sup> The volatility of e-journals makes dealing with print serials look like a walk in the park, with a change of publisher or title often resulting in a new URL for an e-journal and thus creating dead links within our catalogue. For example, the Western North Carolina Library Network reported using Serials Solutions to provide access to over 8,000 journal records. Over a third of these records had changes in the first bi-monthly update file received from Serials Solutions.<sup>4</sup>

The problems are significant, therefore, and the 'magic bullet' for simplified e-journal metadata management remains elusive.<sup>5</sup>

## POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

However, it is not enough to wring our hands and deplore the problems – with an increasing proportion of our budgets being spent on electronic resources and significant investment now at national level in Ireland via IReL, it is incumbent on us to find a solution to this problem within the staffing resources available to us.

Several possible solutions have been suggested and tested by libraries. These include A to Z e-journal lists, portals and the inclusion of e-resource records in the library catalogue, each of which will be discussed here.

#### **A TO Z LISTS**

Faced with the problem of providing speedy access to hundreds of journal titles available through aggregator services, many libraries have created web pages containing A to Z lists of e-journals. Banush, Kurth and Pajarek report that throughout the history of e-journals to date 'the stand-alone e-journal database or web list has continued to be a primary delivery mechanism for e-journal access'.<sup>6</sup> These have been created using vendor-supplied lists of titles merged together, for example by copying and pasting title lists and URLs from the aggregator site itself. Indeed the use of home-made A to Z lists became so widespread towards the end of the 1990s that commercial companies, such as Serials Solutions and Ebsco, began to sell A to Z list services from 2000 onwards.

In terms of making sure that users can find out what electronic journals are accessible to them, A to Z lists certainly provide a relatively quick and easy solution. However, there are several drawbacks associated with this solution. With this approach, a differentiation is being made between different types of resources made available by the library. By providing a separate listing of e-journals, a library is moving away from the one-stop shop of the main library catalogue and creating mini-catalogues for resources in different formats. This puts a burden on our users in that they need to know to check in two places to see if a journal title is available to them via the library: the A to Z list for electronically accessible journals and OPAC for hardcopy journals held in the library.

'It strains user abilities to expect them to access online catalogs to find print holdings, but even more so to know enough to access Web lists located elsewhere to discover online holdings ... consider the plight of the user. In what one place can a user go to check the availability of a journal ... users who are weaned on the "Google approach" face too many choices.'<sup>7</sup>

Another drawback to the A to Z list is that journal access is restricted by this method to title access only. Subject-based access to the journal literature is thus restricted to keyword in title only. Of course, it should be noted that this may not be

as serious a problem as we, as librarians, would imagine. Cornell University Library reports, for example, that fewer than 6% of all searches on their catalogue are subject searches. This is an area that is worthy of closer examination – given the high demand on scant staffing resources, we need to be sure that we are putting effort in where it is of most benefit to our users. However, this is beyond the scope of the current article.

Finally, vendor lists tend to be both inaccurate and volatile. According to Meagher and Brown, 'anyone working with vendor-supplied title lists acknowledges that none of these lists is entirely accurate'.<sup>8</sup> Certainly, given that vendors such as Serials Solutions and Ebsco are dependent on the publishers to provide them with accurate and up-to-date information, it is very likely that these lists will at a minimum be a step behind reality. It is certainly the case that any A to Z list would have to be regularly updated, given the volatility of e-journals and the frequency with which they change publisher and therefore host and URL. A degree of inaccuracy would have to be accepted with this method.

#### **PORTALS AND LINK RESOLVERS**

The second possible solution explored by libraries in the attempt to provide access to electronic resources is the e-resource portal and its close cousin, the link resolver.

Portals, such as Metalib (Exlibris), ENCompass (Endeavour), ZPortal (Fretwell Downing) or MyLibrary (Open Source), employ Z39.50 technology to allow cross-searching across a number of e-resources simultaneously. In this way, they certainly simplify and open up access to our databases. Novice users need no longer learn the interface of a number of library databases, but can simply learn to use the library's portal. Increasingly the portals are designed to emulate as much as possible the seamless simplicity of Google, a perfect solution for Google-generation users.

Link resolvers, such as SFX (ExLibris), Link-Finder*Plus* (Endeavor), Gold Rush (CARL), SirsiResolver (Sirsi), OL (Fretwell-Downing), ArticleLinker (Serials Solutions) and LinkSource (EBSCO), increase this seamlessness by linking the user in a seemingly magical way from a reference to an article in one database to the full text of that article elsewhere. By being configured with information on the library's holdings, link resolvers not only point the user to potential full-text sources of an article, but to the exact full-text

version accessible to users of that library. In NUI Galway, SFX and Metalib from Exlibris have been used to open up access to e-resources to our users. The benefits offered by these technologies have greatly enhanced our users' access to e-resources.

There is no doubt that the integration of access to electronic resources via portals and link resolvers is a huge step forward in improving the way we provide access to e-resources generally and e-journals specifically.

'Readers have come to expect seamless, easy navigation between electronic resources. If something is available online, they would like it to behave like the free web ... All the bells and whistles in the world are useless if they are incompatible with the information-seeking behaviour of real people.'<sup>9</sup> To a large extent, combining the powers of federated searching via a portal and resource linking via a link resolver offers users the seamless and easy navigation they expect. Indeed, Loughborough University reported that the introduction of a portal and link resolver led to a dramatic increase in the use of electronic databases.<sup>10</sup>

In the Irish context, SFX and Metalib provided NUI Galway Library with a method of providing access to the IReL resources quickly and relatively easily. At a time when many new resources were becoming available to us in a very short time span, we were able to very quickly enable portfolios in both SFX and Metalib that immediately linked users to what was available. By linking SFX and Metalib together it was also possible to enable a 'find e-journal' facility in Metalib, which provides the user with a list of every e-journal that SFX has recorded as accessible in full-text. It is worth noting, however, that this service is in effect an A to Z list with the same problems as those listed above, in particular that it provides only title-based access to e-journals.

So do portals provide us with the desired integrated access to library resources? Do they provide the ultimate solution to provision of access to electronic resources? To a large extent the answer must be 'yes'. However, what about our print holdings? Similarly to A to Z lists, portals and link resolvers involve isolating our electronic resources from the remainder of our collection. These access routes also involve differentiating on the basis of format! Users are once again being expected to learn two methods of finding out what journals are available to them – the portal (or find e-journal

list) for electronic journals and the catalogue for print journals.

'If access is not integrated, users will tend to look in one place, forgetting the others and assume they have found all that is available ...'<sup>11</sup>

If Woodward and Archer's statement is true, it seems clear which access point our 'Google-generation' of users is likely to favour. The Google-style interface of a portal, where they can be linked straight through to an electronic version of the article they need, is likely to be more popular than our traditional OPAC, which will tell them that they need to walk to the second floor of the library, find their way to a particular classmark, locate the journal issue they need and then photocopy it or read it in the library!

#### **INTEGRATION OF PRINT AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**

It is undoubtedly the case that in many fields print journals remain important; indeed many journal titles remain unavailable in electronic format. 'Computer technology has simplified and revolutionised legal research, but electronic sources supplement, not supplant, traditional sources for practical and pragmatic reasons.'<sup>12</sup>

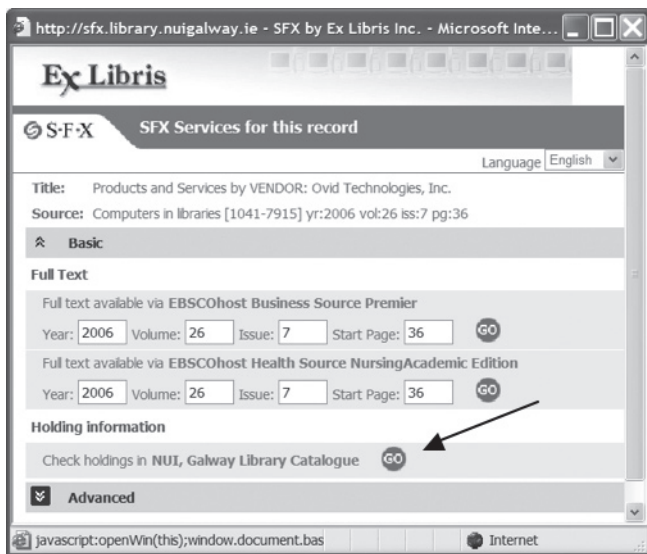
In NUI Galway Library we still have close to 2,000 journal titles that we receive in print. Many of these are simply not available electronically, particularly in the fields of Celtic Studies, and some branches of the arts and humanities. Irish published journals have also been slow to move to the online environment. These are key journals for our user community and we dare not risk them being missed. We have a large number of open-access shelves and further shelving in storage allocated to print journals. Two FTE (Full Time Equivalent) staff members spend their days primarily checking-in print journal issues. Since print journals are still of sufficient significance to have money, staff time and precious storage space allocated to them, risking users not finding what we have in print because they don't think to check in two places simply isn't acceptable. Of course the flip side is equally unacceptable – users who favour the catalogue and never discover the multitude of our e-resources are at risk of missing out on the thousands of titles available to us in electronic format. 'The inability to represent consolidated library holdings is exasperating and misleading to users.'<sup>13</sup>

As long as ten years ago, the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) electronic libraries pro-

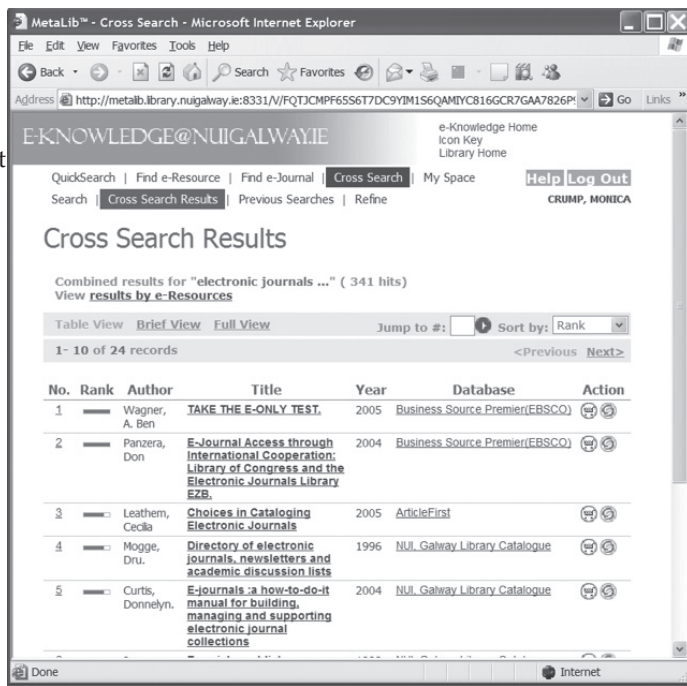


gramme (eLib) phase 3 funded 'Hybrid Libraries' projects, which were aimed at providing 'seamless' access to both print and electronic resources. 'The hybrid library should integrate access to different kinds of resources using different technologies from the digital library world and across different media.'<sup>14</sup> Have we come no closer to this integrated access? Well, in NUI Galway we have attempted to ensure that whichever access route our users favour will provide them with information on both print and electronic holdings.

The first step we've taken is to ensure that the library catalogue is one of the resources offered to the user on the SFX menu. This facility is in fact particularly clever, in that SFX carries out an ISSN search of the catalogue and only offers the catalogue as an option when there is a match, that is when a record exists in the catalogue for this journal. In this way, we know that, once users hit an SFX button for a particular citation, they will be offered both print and electronic options for accessing that resource where relevant.



The next step taken was to ensure that the catalogue is one of the resources that users can search via Metalib. A cross-search can include the catalogue and many of our pre-set cross-searches do.



The search results list shown here displays titles held in print in the library amongst the top five most relevant items for this search topic!

Unfortunately, however, a cross-search can only search eight resources at a time and still maintain acceptable search times. In many subject areas, there are sufficient highly relevant databases that warrant inclusion in a cross-search that including the catalogue would involve excluding a resource that the subject experts feel is of more significance. Additionally, of course, we have no control over how users set up their own cross-searches. We can't force the catalogue to be included in every cross-search, which means that in many cases users may not realise the wealth of print resources available and relevant for their search.

The 'Find e-journal' tool on Metalib, mentioned above, by definition includes only e-journals, and as it currently stands it has no facility to include print journals also. We do, however, provide a link to the catalogue from the Help Key at the side of the 'Find e-journal' page, alerting users to the fact that they should check the catalogue to see our print holdings. We have also included a link to the 'Find e-journal' facility as an option in the library catalogue, so that users employing the traditional means of searching for a journal have an option to search for it in electronic format as well as in print.

#### BETTER INTEGRATION VIA THE LIBRARY CATALOGUE

While the inclusion of the catalogue on the SFX menu is a huge step towards integration of access to resources regardless of format, users only get to the SFX menu if they have reached a citation

electronically and are presented with an SFX button! What about the user who learns about a specific journal title in a book or a printed journal article? In this instance, where there is no SFX button to click, what does the user do? How do they go about finding out if we have access to that journal? Is there a single search that they can carry out?

Even with full implementation of SFX and Met-alib and the benefits and improvements to access they have brought about, there was still no single place a user could go to find out if they could get access to a journal title irrespective of format! The end goal of users is, after all, the content, and they rarely care about what format the content takes. So we returned to considering the catalogue and the feasibility and possibility of including every e-journal accessible to NUI Galway users in it. Our goal was, once again, to seek a way of making the catalogue the 'one-stop shop' for all library resources regardless of format. In doing so, we hoped to provide the single integrated route to all resources – print or electronic – accessible via the library. We also hoped to provide more than simple title-level access.

'In the perfect collection arrangement, all library materials would be integrated, independent of format, allowing the user to locate any or all information on a given subject.'<sup>15</sup>

The catalogue has traditionally been the place where users go to see what the library holds. Familiarity with the OPAC is much greater amongst users than familiarity with any other single information resource the library makes available, since all of our users are offered training on OPAC use and training sessions are run throughout the year. Any member of library staff can show users how to use the OPAC and most users (80% in a recent survey of undergraduates) use the catalogue either occasionally or often. For all of these reasons, it was our desire to ensure that our e-journals were included in the catalogue so that we could finally direct our users to a single point of access to everything the library holds or makes accessible. We also felt that inclusion in the catalogue would increase and further open up access to our electronic journals. California State University reported a doubling of database usage by providing OPAC access, for example.<sup>16</sup>

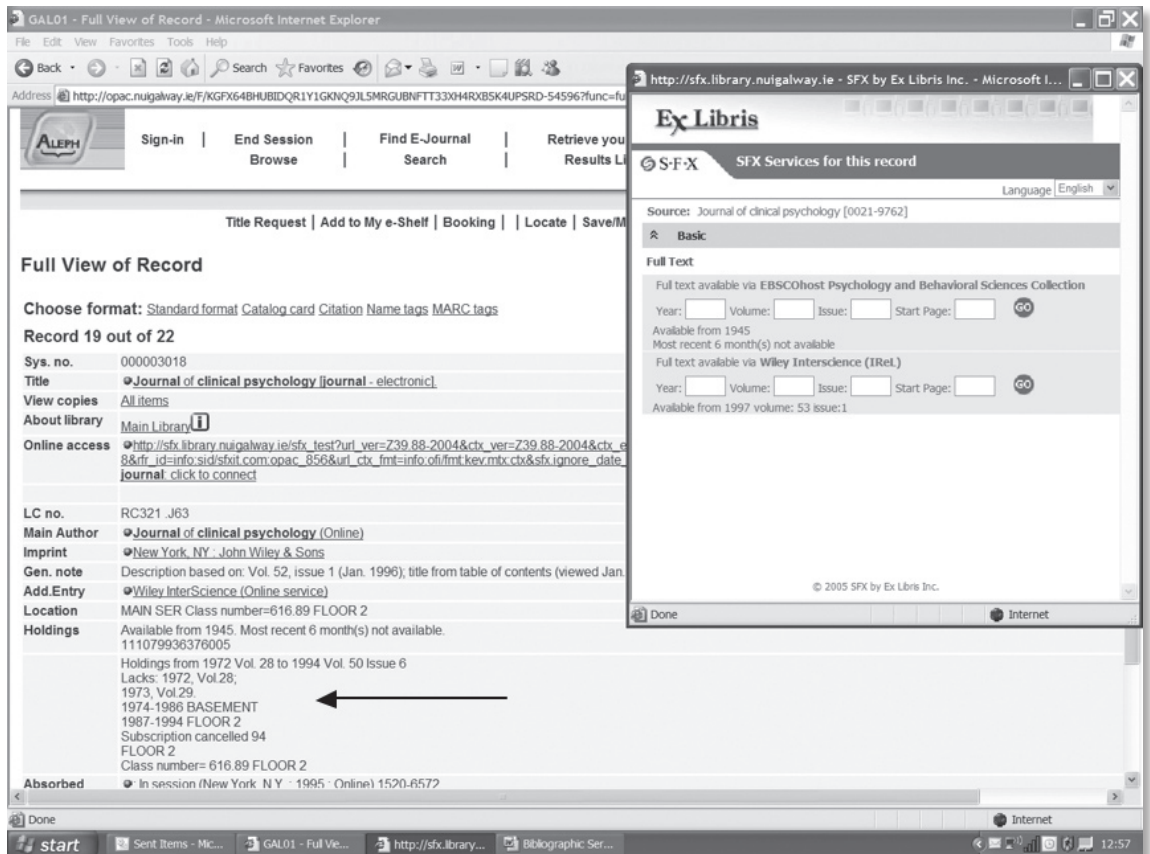
The problem we faced was how best to achieve this goal given the issues and problems outlined above: limited staffing resources; hundreds of titles becoming available with the purchase of one

journal package; difficulties of ongoing maintenance; and so on. NUI Galway had some years previously carried out an e-journal project during which our systems librarian exported journal titles, URLs and any other easily available information from our larger journal bundles (e.g. Science Direct and Ebsco Business Source Premier). These were then converted by an automated process into a MARC format and certain additional fields were added. The resulting MARC records were imported by batch upload into the library catalogue.

Our first thought was to repeat that project for the IReL resources and other resources that had been added since the initial project took place. However, with the exponential increase in e-journals some niggling issues with the batch upload of records had become more significant:

- duplication of titles within aggregator services: the batch loading of records from each aggregator results in multiple records per title, with different periods of coverage in each one
- changing coverage: moving walls and embargo periods make it very difficult to automate the provision of coverage information
- titles moving from one vendor to another: uploaded records become invalid when the vendor loses the right to make that title available; this results in dead links in the catalogue and frustrated users
- print and electronic overlap: the batch upload creates multiple records not just for multiple e-holdings, as mentioned above, but print is also represented on a separate record
- access still being title-based, with no subject enhancement of the brief information exported from the aggregator
- the significant effort required in tailoring the export/import for each resource.

For all of these reasons, it was not desirable to repeat the batch upload project for e-journal holdings. Salvation seemed to come eventually in the form of MARCIt! from Exlibris. MARCIt! is an add-on service to SFX, which exports a brief record for each journal title activated in SFX. These records contain journal title, ISSN, an SFX URL and coverage details specific to our libraries' holdings. Following export MARCIt! 'enhances' the brief record with a full CONSER MARC record, thus adding publisher information, previous titles, subject headings and so on. The resulting records are made available in MARC or



other formats suitable for import into the library-management system. The sales pitch sounded too good to be true but, following some initial problems with our SFX set-up and then with our MARCIt! configuration, the tool proved extremely useful and powerful, and did exactly what it had promised to do!

A fairly simple screen offers all portfolios (i.e. e-resource collections) activated in SFX. From this all full-text-accessible journals can be exported, a few details are provided regarding how we'd like some fields to appear – and that's that! Five minutes or less later a file of CONSER enhanced records is returned in Aleph sequential format – ready for import into Aleph, our library-management system.

At the import stage, we have chosen to build some complexity into the process so as to get the greatest level of integration possible between formats. First of all, we ask Aleph to check the input file to see if any of the records match (by ISSN) with existing records in the catalogue. Any records with no match are imported directly into Aleph with no further editing. Matched records are merged with the existing records. This means that the catalogue contains a single record per journal title, with print holdings information, acquisitions information, e-access information all included on the one record. One unexpected benefit of this process has been that the checking routine alerts

us to existing multiple records (e.g. records from earlier batch uploads, print records, etc.) and we have used the opportunity to tidy these up, before merging a MARCIt! record with them.

The record shown above is an example of a merged record after MARCIt! import. The journal title in question is held in print and has electronic access in more than one place. Note that the URL links to an SFX menu. In the case of all the records exported via MARCIt!, the 856 field provides a URL linking the user to the SFX server and every time a user clicks on the URL an SFX search is carried out. This means that links in the catalogue should now never become out of date – the SFX server is updated regularly when a Knowledge Base update is made available, and these updates reflect changes to the titles held in particular journal packages. The catalogue simply links the user to SFX, where the most up-to-date information is available. This is a real benefit of this approach to integration of e-journals into the library catalogue.

The other advantage of linking to resources via SFX is that the SFX menu presents the user with all access options where this title is available, including the years of coverage in each case. In the example above, the user can see our print holdings for the title *Journal of Clinical Psychology* from the catalogue record (1972–1994) and can see that we have access to the title electronically in two different places. From 1945 up to six

months ago it is accessible via Ebsco Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, and current content from 1997 to date is available from Wiley Interscience. If we cancelled our subscription to Wiley Interscience (for example) this portfolio would be disabled in SFX and therefore the option simply wouldn't appear to the user. No editing of catalogue records would be required!

Meagher and Brown<sup>17</sup> reported on an in-house project called 'Gold Rush' with aims and results very similar to our own MARCIt! project. 'By integrating Gold Rush information into the same bibliographic records as traditional formats, the serials unit weaves online and traditional resources into a seamless environment.'<sup>18</sup> MARCIt! has similarly allowed us to seamlessly integrate access to our print and electronic resources.

### CONCLUSION

SFX and Metalib together have integrated the access to our electronic resources and made them more user-friendly for our 'Google generation' of users. However, this focus on electronic resources was isolating our valuable collection of print resources. We were introducing confusion and complexity to users by splitting our routes of access to resources according to their format. The MARCIt! Service, however, has allowed us to exploit the information in SFX and enhance it so as to put the catalogue back in its position as 'one-stop shop' for all the resources made available by the library regardless of their format.

Of course technology is continuously evolving, and Primo, the latest offering from Exlibris, promises an even greater level of integrated searching and access across all library resources, regardless of their format or location. We will watch with interest whether this promise can be realised and whether this might be the 'silver bullet' to managing the multitude of potential access routes available to our users.

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# Delivering core text material electronically: a project management perspective



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## INTRODUCTION

The John Paul II Library, National University of Ireland Maynooth, serves a student population of approximately 8,400 students. As is the experience of most higher education libraries, meeting the expectations of students around the provision of essential reading material is a continuous challenge.

The Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) was established in 2006 by the Minister for Education and Science to support innovation in higher education institutions in Ireland. As part of a total spend of £236M/€300M<sup>1</sup> spread over five years, the first call for proposals was made for a total fund of £31M/€40M. One of the four key objectives of the SIF funding is to 'support innovation and quality improvement in teaching and learning'.<sup>2</sup>

In line with its strategic plan,<sup>3</sup> the library put in a successful bid in May 2006 under this theme, proposing the appointment of 'a suitably qualified person, on a two-year basis' to establish an 'appropriate and innovative service' that would 'address and manage student expectations in this area'.<sup>4</sup> This was also very closely aligned with the university's teaching and learning strategy<sup>5</sup> and strategic plan.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCEPTION TO IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the implementation of the strategic plan, the student reading team was set up to progress this project. It has strong representation from reader services because of the department's existing responsibility to maintain the reserve and short loan collections.<sup>7</sup> There is representation from the acquisitions department because of its role in applying related collection development policies and from the systems department because of the need for expertise in the application of technology.

Diagram 1 illustrates the project management model adopted by the team. Key features of this model are the scoping stage before any detailed planning takes place and the two stages for assessing the feasibility of the project prior to implementation.

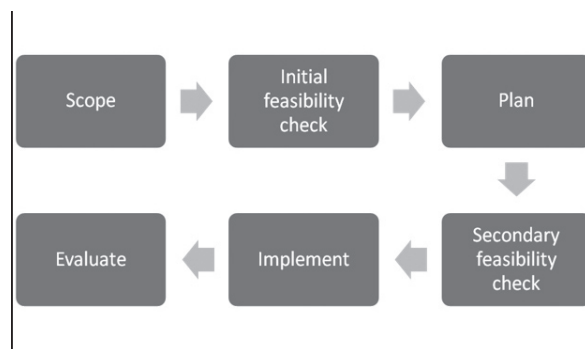


Diagram 1 – Project management model

The team began by scoping the project. This involved outlining the issues the project seeks to address; identifying the stakeholders, their needs and expectations; and defining the aim, objectives and expected outcomes. The result was a clear understanding of the project rationale that gave structure, direction and focus to the planning and implementation stages.

The aim is to provide 24x7 access to as much core text material as possible by December 2008. The aim and objectives were underpinned by two guiding principles that were to inform decisions throughout the project:

- to prioritise solutions with maximum impact;
- to ensure long-term sustainability and mainstreaming.

It was at this stage that the decision was taken to focus primarily on achieving electronic access and to by-pass any formal links to reading lists.

The reason for this is the difficulty, based on past experience, of acquiring reading lists in a comprehensive manner and the effect this might have on progress. It was also felt that this decision could easily be reversed at a later stage, thereby further enhancing access to core text material.

### PLANNING

In February 2007, the library received confirmation that funding had been granted for £44,000/€56,000, with the understanding that the library would commit the same amount. With this in place and the project scoped and assessed, the library's management team gave the go-ahead to bring the project to the next stage.

Having explored all the options, the team recommended the appointment of a project manager for one year at assistant librarian grade as the most effective use of the funding. The post was advertised in April 2007. The successful applicant had the right combination of both library and computing experience.

The project manager started in August 2007 by preparing a detailed project plan and presented it to the management team for review. The management team agreed the plan and the project moved to the next stage – implementation.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The first task was to raise awareness of the project. In addition to e-mailing academic staff directly, this was done through the library's newsletter, the website and the library's space on Moodle, the university's virtual learning environment (VLE).

The next few months were spent researching and putting procedures in place. At this point, it was decided to run a pilot in parallel with other solutions. The sociology department was chosen because of the number of students served by the department and its proactive relationship with the library.

Each procedure is documented in detail. This is vital for training existing and new staff, for keeping track of progress and for future evaluation. Diagram 2 gives an indication of the resulting workflow.

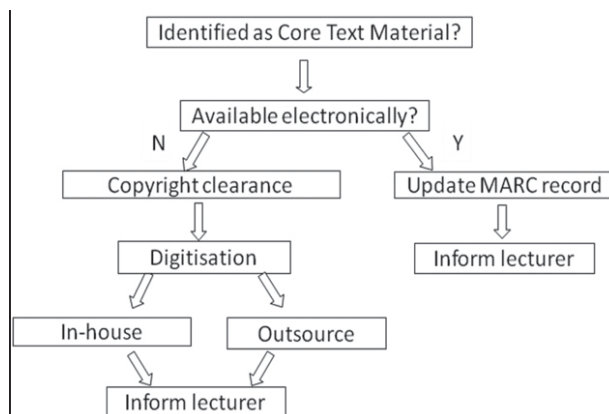


Diagram 2 – Workflow

#### 1) Identifying core text material

During the scope of the project, core text material was defined as material that students are required or expected to read. This definition excludes other additional recommended reading. Core text material is identified from four sources:

- all new material added to the reserve and short loan collections
- a list of material identified as core text compiled by the sociology department
- new book orders submitted by academic staff identified as core text via a tick box added to the order form
- the existing reserve collection.

#### 2) Sourcing material electronically

Once material is identified as core text, the next step is to source the material in electronic format. The following resources are searched:

- the library's subscribed databases of full-text electronic resources
- the university's institutional repository
- databases of electronic material that are freely available
- database catalogues.<sup>8</sup>

If the print version is already held by the library, a persistent link is added to the 856 field (electronic location and access) in the catalogue record. Otherwise, a catalogue record is imported or created.

#### 3) Copyright clearance

If material is not readily available in electronic format, copyright clearance to digitise is sought via the digital extension to the Irish Copyright Licensing Agency's Higher Education Licence<sup>9</sup> or directly from publishers. Due to the current limitations of the digital licence, copyright clearance is more often sought directly from the publishers.

Typically, this involves a copyright fee based on the number of students who need access to the material, the number of pages involved and the length of time for which the material is required. In situations where copyright clearance is denied, most copyright holders are willing to allow between 10% and 20% of the material to be digitised.

#### 4) Digitising the material

The next step in the process is digitising the material. Material of less than twenty pages is scanned in-house, otherwise it is outsourced. In both incidences, the material is scanned at a resolution of 300 dots per inch. The text is converted to searchable text using optical character recognition (OCR) and the file is saved in portable document format (PDF).

When the material has been scanned, a template is inserted at the start of the PDF file giving bibliographic details, module and lecturer details and any appropriate credit lines or copyright notices that need to be included, for example 'Reproduced with permission of ...' or 'The download of this file is intended for the user's own and personal and non-commercial use ...'.

Using LEFT, free software to facilitate data transfer, the file is sent to the lecturer for uploading to the module space on Moodle. Access to the material is only available to the students registered for the relevant module. This fulfils the terms under which permission is granted to digitise the material.

#### EVALUATION

There are now over 200 core text items available electronically. Of these, 32% are books, 35% are chapters and 33% are journal articles.

Costs for the project consist of three main factors: the subscription fee, the copyright and digitisation fees and staff resources. Some examples:

- subscription fee – the average cost of a book sourced through NetLibrary is £78/€100.
- copyright clearance fee – an average is the £130/€165 charged for a chapter of 22 pages for 191 students. The cheapest to date has been £55/€70 for a book of 422 pages for 30 students. The most expensive has been £2,040/€2,590 for a book of 399 pages for 95 students. Needless to say, this book did not get past this stage!

- digitisation fee – the in-house costs are the staff time involved. Outsourced digitisation is charged at 9p/12c per page per bound item and 6p/8c per page per unbound item. This includes the unbinding and rebinding.

Diagram 3 illustrates the comparative costs based on a chapter that was digitised in-house (£180/€230), a book that had its digitisation process outsourced (£102/€130) and a book that was available electronically (£78/€100).

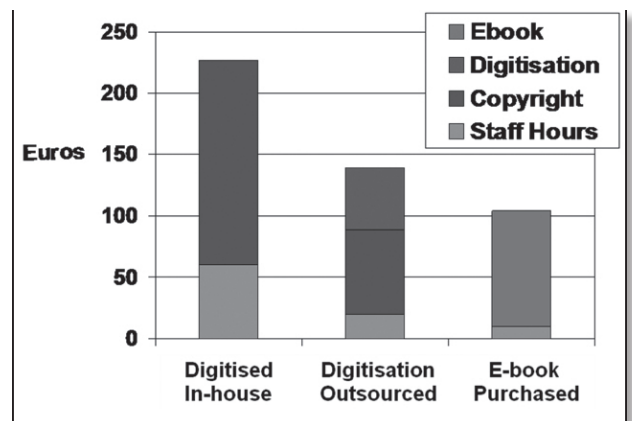


Diagram 3 – Comparative costs

Overall, feedback has been very positive. The usage reports available from Netlibrary are indicating a high level of usage. Academic staff are reporting that material on Moodle is being used at all times of the day, night and week:

'Easy and open access to essential readings will greatly improve lecturers' ability to design innovative courses and will provide students with a greater range of readings and of ways to get access to them.' (Professor Sean Ó Riain, Department of Sociology)

Students are using the library's facility to download this material to their MP3 players. Having the material accessible electronically is offering greater flexibility for users with disabilities:

'It ties in well with the culture and expectations of our talented and tech savvy iPod generation students.' (Tom Mulvey, Department of Business and Law)

Library staff are also pleased with the development opportunities this project has provided. In addition, the library's profile has been enhanced, particularly amongst academic staff.

Before the project concludes, the following areas need to be investigated:

- a more reliable procedure for uploading files to Moodle;
- a link from the catalogue to Moodle;
- collection-maintenance procedures;
- better usage statistics;
- feedback from users;
- more sources for e-books;
- a final report with recommendations for the future of the service.

#### **FUTURE OF THE SERVICE**

Some of the issues the final report is likely to highlight include:

- integration with other library functions – being more proactive about ordering electronic versions of books forces the library to examine its existing collection development policies and procedures. It needs to consider whether the priority is to purchase electronic rather than print. As part of the project, individual catalogue records are imported or created for electronic books. This is currently at variance with material purchased as a package via a database provider.
- staff resources – already staff have been restructured to provide additional resources to the project. This may need to be sustained in order to maintain and develop the service.
- file formats – alternative formats may need to be considered, as PDF is not the most suitable format for anyone wishing to convert files to make them more accessible for their particular needs or to download files to mobile phones and iPods.
- storage – while there is currently adequate storage space on Moodle, if the amount of material provided via Moodle grows considerably, extra storage space will need to be investigated.
- raised user expectations – this project seeks to address user expectations in the provision and access to core text materials. The current set of user expectations is likely to shift and will need to be addressed. Web 2.0 technology could play a vital role in enhancing and adding value to the service.
- usage patterns of e-books – the outcome of the JISC national e-book observatory project,<sup>10</sup> which aims to understand how e-books are being used, and other research in this area are likely to influence the future direction of the service. For example, some

subjects, such as law, rely very heavily on print material regardless of electronic availability.

- copyright and digitisation – the expected expansion of the Irish Copyright Licensing Agency's license for digital material will change the cost/benefit analysis ratio regarding material requiring digitisation. In addition, as more and more material becomes available electronically, there may be less need to digitise and a reliance on a service such as HERON<sup>11</sup> could become more attractive.
- collaboration – there is potential to explore and develop collaborative partnerships between libraries, suppliers, copyright agencies and professional bodies, both in Ireland and internationally.

#### **CONCLUSION**

From a project management perspective, the importance of the scoping stage cannot be emphasised enough. It is essential for clarity of vision, a vital ingredient in a successful outcome. As Abraham Lincoln is quoted as saying, 'Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.'<sup>12</sup>

Answering the question 'Is this project worthwhile?', the response is very definitely 'yes'. It is succeeding in achieving its aim and objectives and ultimately in addressing the needs of the students and fulfilling expected outcomes. Furthermore, it has the potential to develop into a key and valuable service for the foreseeable future.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Laura Brett, project manager, August 2007–March 2008; Marie Cullen, project manager, March 2008–; and Emma Boyce, Della Webb and Louise Saults, for their continued hard work and commitment to the project.

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  - the MARC record for each subscribed title is included;
  - access if for 5 years which is perfect for core text material;
  - a range of usage reports are available.
 A disadvantage is NetLibrary's policy of one simultaneous user
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## The Library Game – using creative games technology to develop the library, learning and information skills of our students – the story so far



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### BACKGROUND TO THE GAME

The University of East London is one of the most diverse universities in the sector, with more than 20,000 students originating from over 100 different countries worldwide, and this diversity is likely to increase. It is well known that students in universities that are committed to widening participation need more rather than less support, and this is one reason for the relatively high use of our libraries. We are well aware, for example, that

the experience of our international students can be very different from our home and EU students. This wide variety of students from a range of backgrounds presents a significant challenge for our important work in introducing new users to library and information services.

The project presented here evolved at the same time as we opened our wonderful new library at our Docklands campus. We sought new ways of promoting these splendid new learning spaces and the services they contain, and we identified games technology as having the potential to provide an innovative and enjoyable way of learning library and information skills. An entertaining and enticing game could replace the rather tired and ineffective library tour often provided at the start of each semester.

We approached Elias Pimenidis, a national expert in gaming software in our school of computing and technology, who thought that teaching library skills would be an interesting application for games technology.

Developing the information literacy of our users is one important aspect of our contribution to our university's learning and teaching strategy. The university's learning and teaching committee encourages bids for projects that will enhance the learning and teaching experience and promote students' success. Such projects are normally awarded to our academic schools, but we took the bold step of making a joint bid with the school of computing and technology to develop 'The Library Game'.

We produced a briefing document outlining the need to develop a library game to introduce our diverse student population to library services. We envisaged a game that would be fun and interactive for both novice computer users and mature gamers. If successful, it might attract more students to use the library facilities and even interest other university libraries in using this approach.

Our bid for some £10,000 for an eighteen-month project was successful – a small sum in view of the ambitious nature of our project, but at least we could experiment with enhancing the experience of learning library skills.

Our partnership approach was crucial. The project team consisted of two library staff – the director of service (Andrew McDonald) and the academic services and skills manager (Simone Okolo) – and Elias Pimenidis, a senior lecturer in the school of

computing and technology. The director of library and learning services provided the vision and impetus for the project, guiding and supporting its progress. The academic services and skills manager was responsible for managing and delivering the project, and acted as the library contact for the game's developers. The senior lecturer in the school of computing and technology provided expert academic leadership and support, guiding four of his students through the design, development and testing of the game in relation to our specification. This gave these undergraduates on a computer games programme of study valuable first-hand experience of developing a game in response to customers' requirements. Developing the game using commercial software specialists would have been way out of our financial reach.

The development team faced a number of challenges. They had to capture a real library environment in the game and concentrate on the pedagogic challenge of ensuring that players understood how to use various library services rather than simply playing the game itself.

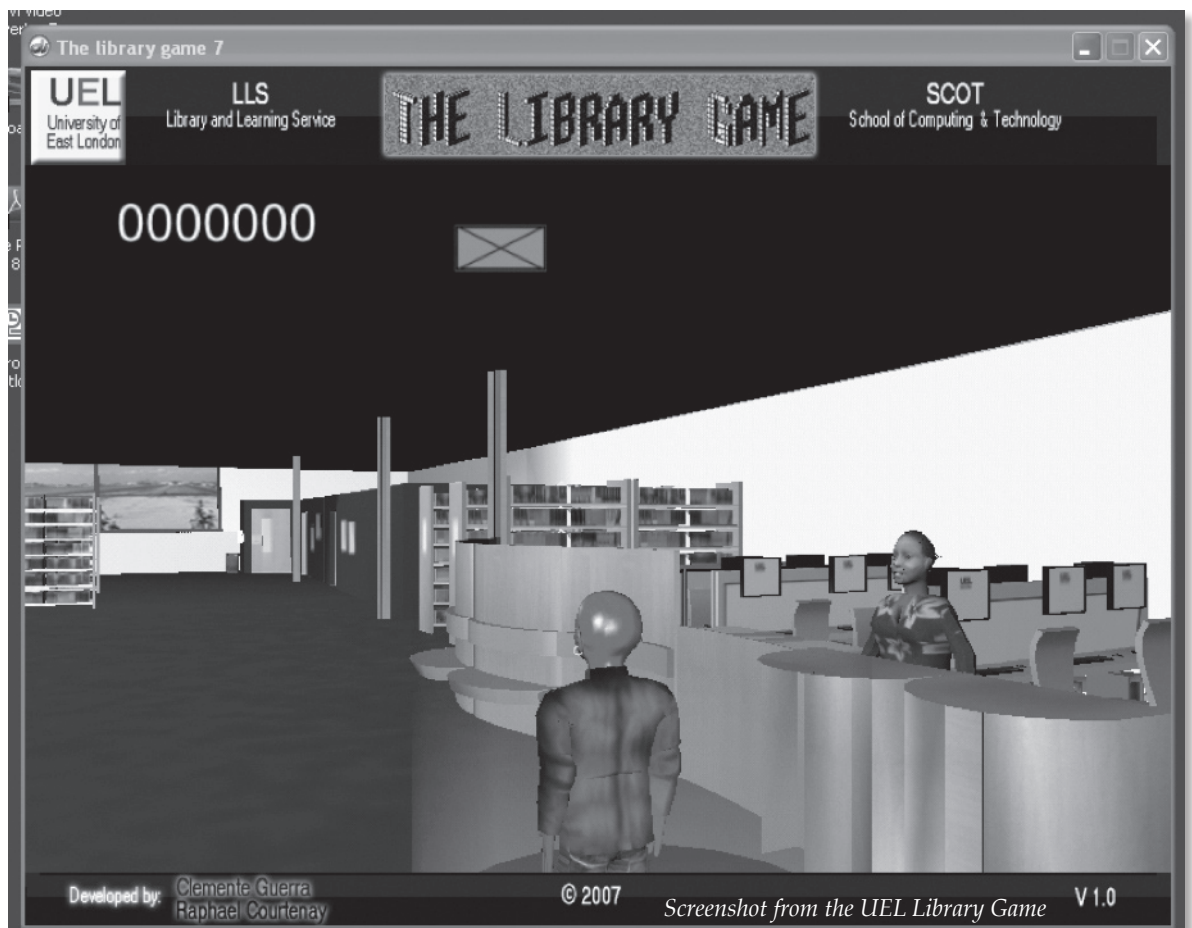
#### **EDUCATIONAL GAMES IN ACADEMIA**

Academic gaming can provide the social and contemplative counterpart of sensual video gaming while maintaining the elements of fun that make games so attractive to a wide range of people. It is these features of the computer games used in academia that inspired the project discussed here.

In designing a computer game developers have to establish the objectives of the game by identifying its desired impact: here for helping library users navigate new library services. This influences the gameplay, especially the motivational elements of the game design. They also need to consider what will make the user continue to want to play the game until the objectives are fully achieved. The impetus to explore the use of games technology in our information skills work lies with the fact that as librarians we continuously seek new and innovative ways of teaching students library skills.

Acquiring library skills as early as possible in their learning careers is essential for students to enjoy success in their academic work. Library skills are about learning how to learn, are part of being an educated person and are valuable lifelong and employment skills.

Learning these new skills is not always easy, and creating effective library induction programmes that enhance the learning of library skills offers



several challenges. It is these challenges that the game discussed here aims at overcoming.

#### DEVELOPING THE GAME

The challenge for the project team was to offer the experience of a virtual-world learning environment to university students. The aim was to present a game that would enhance their experience of gaining library skills, sometimes regarded as a rather tedious and unexciting experience, particularly amongst a student population characterised by wide cultural and educational diversity. In doing so the developers had to overcome the strict training environment of academic gaming, introducing gaming elements that make the game attractive to this diverse student population and, at the same time, maintaining the educational focus.

The game starts on the main floor of the library – the most important part of the library – where librarians, the main helpdesk, self-service machines, online catalogues, photocopiers, printers and binding machines can all be found. The story is of an alien who crash-lands at City Airport and who surfaces in the university library nearby and realises he has to learn how to use our services to survive.

Players are presented with an easy-to-use interface. For each stage of the game the interface presents a set of instructions and this provides continuous guidance for the player throughout the game

The game is subdivided into a set of mini-games. Starting off, the player is required to find a book situated on a particular shelf and, once located, the player will have to pick the book off the shelf and borrow it, using the self-service machines. Each mini-game presents the player with a particular interface, and once completed the game reverts to the initial interface.

There will be five mini-games at the end of the current phase of development. They cover:

- finding a book on the online catalogue
- finding a book on the shelves
- using the self-check machines to borrow a book
- asking a question at the helpdesk
- photocopying a chapter of a book.

The game also features a scoring system to determine the winner and the relevant reward.

The development team initially comprised four students who produced a design specification for

a very early 'pre-alpha' version of the game. The team was subsequently reduced to two students, who continued with two revisions of the original design and, almost fifteen months after the initiation of the project, completed a competent beta version of the game. It is this beta version that is due to be tested by a wide audience of users, comprising students from different schools across the university.

A questionnaire has been developed that aims to capture feedback from all participants in the evaluation release phase of the game. The purpose of the feedback is two-fold: firstly, to provide an analysis of the educational impact of the game on users and, secondly, to allow the developers to identify improvements in the technical and game-play features of the game.

#### **SOME REFLECTIONS**

We are convinced that games software can provide an innovative and accessible electronic environment in which our diverse user-community can learn basic library skills. So many of our new students are familiar with games when they come to university. A well-designed game can provide an enjoyable and unthreatening learning experience which motivates students to learn these important library skills. The challenge is to design a game that not only absorbs and motivates the learner but that also holds their interest throughout the experience. It must concentrate on identified pedagogic aims and embed these new skills in the student's learning. Unlike in other areas of gaming, pedagogy is more important than competitiveness.

Games have the potential to create different learning environments that will be accessible by people from a variety of backgrounds and cultures and by people with a variety of disabilities. The architecture can be diagnostic and can enable players to find out just how much or little they know about the library and then play the appropriate part of the game to develop the necessary skills.

Our project was an ambitious one that would have cost considerably more to develop in a commercial environment. We have developed a beta test game for evaluation, which has the potential to enhance student learning. As a result, the students who developed the game have had invaluable experience of applying gaming theory to a particular situation and this work will enrich their CVs. Library staff have had invaluable development experience of managing an innova-

tive learning-enhancement project in collaboration with an expert in an academic school. The library has demonstrated its continued commitment to innovation in information literacy and to student success. The project has already been presented at our university's annual learning and teaching conference and at a European conference on games-based learning.

Although this is only a welcome start for us, it is likely that games and virtual worlds will play an increasingly important role in developing the learning and skills of our students.

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# IL at eye level: Cardiff's Handbook for information literacy teaching comes to your screen

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Have you ever wished for a single, comprehensive source of tips, guidelines, examples and ideas for information literacy teaching? Specially tailored to a higher education environment? Downloadable and adaptable at the click of a hyperlink? Look no further than Cardiff's *Handbook for information literacy teaching* (HILT), now available on the web at:

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/insrv/education-andtraining/infolit/hilt/>.

We had two main aims when developing HILT. First, we wanted to equip subject librarians and



other Cardiff staff playing an information literacy (IL) role with techniques to promote IL within academic schools, prepare learning outcomes and deliver and evaluate effective learning experiences for their target audiences. Secondly, we wanted to ensure consistent and high-quality practice in IL teaching across the information services division. HILT is intended to form a central element of our staff training for IL practitioners.

But now HILT has gone global. Our web version is available under Creative Commons licence and enables the wider IL community to access the handbook's content and materials. As a result, we have received expressions of interest from librarians across the UK and enthusiastic comments from the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland. A practitioner from Stockholm has even expressed a wish to translate sections into Swedish.

Indeed, we welcome the use and adaptation of the handbook by anyone in the national and international academic communities, provided that this is for non-commercial purposes and the Cardiff source is acknowledged.

## **HILT'S HISTORY**

Our inspiration was Cardiff's *Information skills teaching* manual, written in 1996. In the light of the university's approval of an 'Information literacy guidance note' in 2002 (updated in 2007)<sup>1</sup> and its merger with the University of Wales College of Medicine in 2004, we decided to completely overhaul the original manual, making it applicable to the twenty-first century. The result was the first *Handbook for information literacy teaching*, which was launched internally in 2005. It was extensively revised in 2007, following internal evaluation by Cardiff's subject librarians and external

evaluation by four other South Wales institutions.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the revised version responds to the needs and tastes of our Cardiff audience, and has also to an extent been influenced by the comments of external practitioners.

The examples of original materials at the end of the *Handbook* were contributed by subject librarians from across information services and have proved especially popular. These include ideas for library orientation, practical IL exercises, database user guides and templates for feedback forms and marking sheets. Together they constitute a set of 'pre-invented wheels' covering the entire IL teaching process, and are geared towards learners ranging from the new student to the researcher. These materials can be adapted or customised for specific subjects with minimal effort or may serve as inspiration for entirely new approaches.

The case studies interspersed throughout the *Handbook* are new to this edition and are intended to illustrate some of the creative methods used in Cardiff. Each case study presents a subject librarian's overview of a particular method, to help inspire and encourage others. We hope that these small nuggets of wisdom have added a 'human touch'.



#### Have you tried...?

##### Using music in Information Literacy sessions

Get your workshop or lecture off to a good start by using the power of music! Carefully chosen tracks played on a CD player or PA system as students arrive can create an informal and welcoming atmosphere. Feedback from students indicates that this is a popular approach. However, don't just reach for your favourite CD! Think carefully about the mood you want to create. Choose music which is appropriate to the time of day (e.g. something relaxing and unobtrusive for a 9am session or something lively and invigorating for that after lunch slot!). Music can also be effectively used at the end of a session or to indicate the start and finish of activities. You will have lots of fun experimenting!

(Check first that your institution holds a PP2 licence.)

*Nigel Morgan, Science Library*

For further information see:

Campbell, Don. 2001. *The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind, and Unlock the Creative Spirit*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

To tailor the *Handbook* to our audience's preferences even more, we decided to adjust the writing style so that the text appears less formal and wordy. The five members of the HILT Group sharpened their shears and gave each section a thorough and systematic pruning according to a set of pre-determined style guidelines. The outcome is, we hope, a more readable and concise document. In the print version, we also had space to add some cartoon illustrations to enliven the text. Unfortunately, due to restrictions in the copyright licences, we were unable to incorporate these into the web version.

#### HOW CAN HILT HELP ME?

We think that the *Handbook* is crammed with good ideas. Are you looking for ways to brighten up library inductions by incorporating interactivity? If so, look no further than the Cephalonian Method; you'll find information and a case study on Cardiff's popular method in the 'Library Orientation' section.

Need advice on planning a lesson for your students? Check out our 'Lesson Planning' and 'Lesson Formats' sections. You'll find a handy checklist of recommended items to include in your lesson plan and advice on preparing instructor notes (essential when a colleague has to deliver a session in your absence). There are also tips on giving one-to-one sessions and using flexible teaching methods to cater for the specific needs of your learners. You'll find lots of other suggestions too, including the use of mind mapping, audience response technology and quiz formats for lectures. We also include tips on making sure that your chosen gadgets behave on the day!

The thought of standing in front of a class can strike fear into the heart of any new IL teacher. If you are new to the field, you will find plenty of reassurance in the 'Lesson Delivery' section, which features sound advice on presentation skills. However, if you are an 'old hand', there are helpful tips on managing your teaching environment and your students to ensure things run as smoothly as possible.

Evaluation and reflection are vital. We discuss various ways of eliciting feedback, formally and informally, including seeking the views of tutors on how students have benefited as a result of your teaching. You may also be called upon to take part in the formal assessment of students' work. The 'Assessment' section discusses various methods of performance-measurement and associated mark-

ing schemes for taught students, to help you and the school gauge how IL-'wise' your students are.

Finally, there is a useful template document to help you make a case for embedding IL into curricula. At Cardiff, we consider embedding to be central to a successful IL strategy.

#### **HOW DO I ACTUALLY USE THE HANDBOOK?**

HILT is designed to be dipped into as the need arises rather than read from cover to cover. Subject librarians at Cardiff are encouraged to treat it as a practical tool, to annotate their printed copy, attach their own notes and repurpose the teaching materials. Indeed, HILT can be used in a variety of ways:

- If you are new to teaching, HILT provides background reading to give you a grounding in the basic skills required of IL teachers.
- If you are a more experienced practitioner, you can enhance your existing skills by exploring new ideas and topics.
- HILT can be a useful aid to reflective practice. You may find suggestions that may inspire you to change or develop your teaching. Even if you disagree with us, you will find much food for thought.
- HILT is a source of practical advice and tips gleaned from our experiences, successes and disasters!
- You can use the teaching materials as they stand or adapt them to your own requirements.

We have made the *Handbook* available in both Word and PDF formats. If you are extracting or adapting material, you can simply copy and paste the text from the Word version, subject to the terms of our Creative Commons licence (you will find a link to this on the HILT web page).

#### **WATCH THIS SPACE**

HILT is still being developed. The substantial revision of the text in 2007 has meant that we now can focus on adding extra features. These will include:

- an index so that you can quickly find where terms such as 'learning outcomes' or 'online tutorials' appear in the text
- a bibliography indicating some of the books, journal articles and web sites that have inspired us and that will provide useful further reading for each topic.

During 2009 we will again revise the text to take account of new IL developments; for example, we will be expanding the section on library orientation to include innovative methods such as 'library bingo'. We will also enhance the text with more case studies.

So watch this space for exciting future developments! And remember: comments and suggestions on any aspect of the *Handbook* would be extremely welcome.

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# Going Greek: introducing the Cephalonian method at WIT Libraries

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## INTRODUCTION

'And what is the use of a book', thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?' (p.7)<sup>1</sup> This little Wonderland girl had a definite point. Books, and indeed, the libraries that contain them, plus all of these libraries' additional resources, are notoriously difficult to navigate. Call numbers, Dewey decimal classification, online databases, PDFs – these are just some of the litany of terminologies that library users are expected to decipher. Little wonder, then, that library anxiety – 'an uncomfortable feeling or emotional disposition characterized by tension, fear, feelings of uncertainty and helplessness, negative and self-defeating thoughts, and mental disorganization that appear only when students are in or contemplating a visit to the library'<sup>2</sup> – is a common complaint among undergraduate students.

## LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAMME

We at WIT libraries are actively seeking to address this condition by promoting the library in a positive light as an approachable, accessible, informative and, above all, welcoming centre of excellence. The learning support programme plays a key role in this process. Based on the philosophy that if you give a man (or indeed, a woman) a fish, you feed him for a day but if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for life, the programme's ultimate aim is the development of 'fishermen' – independent lifelong learners who are capable of recognising when information is needed and who have the ability to locate, access, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.<sup>3</sup>

The programme consists of a series of training sessions, including introductory library skills classes for undergraduates, advanced courses for second to final years and research support sessions for postgraduates and staff. In a bid to equip participants with a transferable set of information literacy skills, so as to improve the quality of their research output and ensure lifelong learning, the programme takes a student-centred approach. It includes a large measure of interactivity and is organised according to a progression of levels and abilities.

## PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

As the programme co-ordinator, my personal goal for my classes is for students' initial impressions of the library to be positive ones, the assumption being that if they start out viewing the library, and indeed its librarians, as welcoming and informative, they are more likely to return to us with their information queries and to become confident, competent lifelong users.

In line with Shuell's view that 'what the student does is more important in determining what is learned than what the teacher does' (p.429),<sup>4</sup> my overall vision for learning support is for students to take centre stage within the classroom, while the librarian acts as a facilitator, or 'guide on the side', who directs them towards independent learning through active learning techniques.

The question as to how to achieve my goal on a day-to-day basis, and my vision in the longer term, represents a constant challenge for me. Let me put my position in context by outlining my impression of an ideal class, as against the real library classes that I regularly encounter.

## THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

In an ideal class, the audience's attention is immediately engaged. The teacher succeeds in putting the students at their ease and awakening their interest in the topic within a matter of minutes. By generating this kind of enthusiasm at the outset, the lesson continues on a positive note. The class becomes actively involved in the learning process through dialogue with the teacher. This makes for an optimal learning environment, where students are encouraged to make what they learn part of themselves by talking and writing about it, relating it to past experiences and applying it to their daily lives.<sup>5</sup>



This is in contrast to my regular classes, where every group is an unknown quantity and where one of the major difficulties that I face is gauging the students' levels of library knowledge. I tend to rely on the individual groups to supply me with this information in the first few minutes of class. Those who offer spontaneous feedback provide me with an invaluable starting point for the session, not only in terms of its coverage but also in terms of initiating a dialogue with the group. Student attention has been gained and the ice is broken, as it were.

Unfortunately, some groups refuse to interact. My queries are met with 'blank faces, glazed over eyes and stifled yawns' (p.4)<sup>6</sup> or, worse still, by 'a wall of silence' (p.38)<sup>7</sup>. The students are perhaps suspicious of my unfamiliar face and maybe even a bit anxious about being exposed as inept library users. My own anxiety and anticipation may at this stage be obvious too. These types of sessions are difficult. I get off on the wrong foot and despite attempts to gain the students' attention at various stages throughout the class, the ice never really breaks.

So where can I find a solution to my predicament? Let me begin with some tried and trusted friends – a selection of the literature on the topic.

#### **WHAT THE PAPERS SAY**

According to my reading, a potential solution lies within the classroom itself and specifically relates to the students' first impressions of the training sessions. The opening sequence of the class is thus vital, with Oswald and Turnage, for example, claiming that effective training depends on the tone being set in the first five minutes of class: 'So much is happening between the students and the librarian in the first five minutes of class. Librarians who can create enthusiasm for the subject can hook the students' attention, thus creating a positive learning environment' (p.350).<sup>8</sup>

The importance of injecting enthusiasm or 'gaining attention' at the very beginning of class is also emphasised by Gagne,<sup>9</sup> who recommends using a stimulus to arouse learners' interest and to set the momentum for the session. Morgan and Davies' paper, which discusses best practice for library induction, provides a dynamic example of one such stimulus in the shape of the Cephalonian method. This technique was invented by the authors and is based on 'a fusion of colour, music and audience participation which is designed to appeal to the senses. The main feature of the

method is that students drive the session forward by asking us a series of questions from cards distributed as they arrive. (p.5)<sup>10</sup>

Despite the fact that the librarian controls the lesson's overall structure and content, the Cephalonian method directly involves the audience to the extent that the class has 'the illusion of being 'student-driven' (p.5).<sup>11</sup> It therefore encourages genuine student interaction and dramatically alters the dynamics of traditional 'show and tell' library training. In this way, it cultivates a classroom climate which is conducive to an interactive 'learning by doing' approach, somewhat akin to Lancaster's description of performance-entertainments and also relevant to my own personal vision for learning support: 'These kinds of events demand active participation by spectators which blur the boundary between the performers' space and the spectators' space, as they create the performance event together' (p.77).<sup>12</sup>

In terms of energising my own library classes, I thought the Cephalonian method might be exactly the type of catalyst that I need. As an example of a highly effective icebreaker for gaining students' attention and motivating them to become positively involved and engaged in their learning, the method is certainly worth a try!

#### **CEPHALONIA COMES TO TOWN**

On the basis that 'first impressions count', I have decided to apply a version of the Cephalonian method to my library classes. The new classroom technique is based on prompting students to ask questions from pre-prepared flash cards at the start of class in a bid to establish an immediate rapport with the group. The rationale behind this technique is multifaceted. It not only underlines the value of classroom interaction and the importance of questioning and dialogue but also instills in students a sense of responsibility for the class as well as the confidence to ask spontaneous questions of their own.

The approach makes for an inclusive, participatory environment where the librarian acts as a facilitator, taking questions from the floor. Students are encouraged to interact with the librarian and to become actively involved in their own learning. Lessons thus become a two-way, reciprocal event. Given that it provides a fun way of introducing the library and of prompting students to ask for follow-up help, I predict that this approach will help to 'break the ice' by capturing students' attention at the very beginning of class.

I am also hopeful that it will help to dispel library anxiety by promoting a long-term positive attitude towards the library.

#### **A GOOD START IS HALF THE WORK**

I decided to start small by concentrating on one particular aspect of the learning support programme. Following Moore, Walsh and Risquez's viewpoint that 'technology is best utilized as a way of facilitating student engagement, empowering their own autonomous approaches to learning, and enhancing interaction among teachers and students' (p.96),<sup>13</sup> I focused on the introductory powerpoint presentation that we use to open first-year training sessions.

The adaptation of this opening sequence so as to accord with the principles of the Cephalonian method proved time-consuming. It involved reworking the powerpoint presentation into a series of question cards and complementary answer slides to be delivered as an icebreaker during the first fifteen minutes of class.

The following steps were necessary:

- 1 Preparing a series of questions as based on the pre-existing powerpoint slides for first year classes
- 2 Organising the questions into themed and numbered colour-coded categories with a distinctive visual identity, for example,
  - red – general information (opening hours etc.)
  - green – services (information desk etc.)
  - silver – facilities (printer-copier etc.)
- 3 Converting these questions onto matching colour cards, using simple language and humorous graphics to appeal to the students
- 4 Preparing corresponding colour-coded answer slides for each of the questions
- 5 Developing a handout to accompany the session.

I also spent some time accumulating small prizes for the students who read the questions aloud for the class. The promotional freebies (pens, pencils etc.) that the library receives from some of the database vendors are ideal, although some of the literature also recommends distributing chocolate.<sup>14</sup>

#### **'PICTURES AND CONVERSATIONS'**

I am currently piloting my version of the Cephalonian method with students. This involves ran-

domly distributing the question cards as the groups arrive, explaining the system to the class and working through the themes in a logical order during the first fifteen minutes of the lesson. Following the category divisions, questions from the red cards are called for first, then the green cards and finally the silver. In each case, the corresponding powerpoint answer slide is selected as a back-up to my verbal answer.

Rather, then, than basing the entire introduction on a set of passive powerpoint slides, the pace of which is dictated and controlled by the librarian, the new technique focuses on the interactive question cards, with the powerpoint technology playing a secondary role.

In a bid to involve the students from the outset, I aim to be enthusiastic, to move around the room and to inject as much humour as possible into the question-and-answer section.

The reaction to date has been very positive. Students appear to be energised and enthused by the question cards. They quite obviously enjoy having some ownership over the lesson and, whether as a direct consequence of this technique or not, they are certainly more alert and involved than the students in many of my pre-Cephalonian classes.

From my own point of view as teacher or trainer, my initial experience of the Cephalonian method is that, aside from requiring significant preparation time, it also requires particular skills on the part of the co-ordinator. Adapting to the role of an approachable, informative 'guide on the side', as distinct from an authoritarian 'sage on the stage' is paramount. The method also involves an element of risk in terms of maintaining a balancing act between empowering students on the one hand while dealing with the consequences of this loss of control on the other.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Despite these caveats, I intend to continue piloting my variation of the Cephalonian method during class. I am hopeful that it will ultimately help me to achieve what Oswald and Turnage describe as 'the results we desire – students who are confident that they will succeed in meeting their immediate information need and who have a positive feeling toward librarians and libraries' (p.350),<sup>15</sup> and also students who, like Alice in Wonderland, are not afraid to ask questions!

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# Guides at the side: developing Informs through community collaboration



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In May 2007, Informs, the information literacy software tool, left its original home at the University of Huddersfield and headed across the Pennines to the University of Manchester and Intute. Well loved by its users, Informs had firmly established itself as a key resource for information literacy practitioners; however, the internet landscape had changed rapidly in the seven years since the software was first introduced. Informs was in need of a facelift.

An input of funding from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has given Intute the opportunity to work with the Informs community to decide on the future direction of the resource. This is what we have achieved so far, and what we are planning for the future.<sup>1</sup>

## THE STORY SO FAR

The story of Informs began with the JISC-funded INHALE and INFORMS projects at the University of Huddersfield.<sup>2</sup> Aiming to develop web-based learning materials that would equip students with transferable information literacy skills, INHALE maintained a focus on working with live websites and the development of a searchable set of materials that the academic community could share and re-purpose. The 'Guide at the Side' split-screen design was created and Informs has remained a key resource for information literacy practitioners in academic libraries across Britain ever since.

After its move to Intute, Informs' popularity continued to grow, and it is now used by over

200 higher and further education institutions. We realised very quickly how many dedicated users we had inherited: users who had invested a lot of time and effort in their portfolios of tutorials and who were committed to the Informs concept. Here are just a few of the comments that we received:

‘Without Informs, our approach to information literacy would be scuppered. Student feedback on Informs used within our skills module tells us that their understanding and use of e-resources has improved as a result of our Informs tutorials. More importantly, they are telling us that their marks are also improving!’

‘I love using informs as this is great to introduce distance learners to databases who would normally miss out on classes. Students in classes always comment on how they enjoy using it to learn by doing rather than being shown.’

‘I can’t imagine how long it would have taken me to develop my online tutorials without it!’

However, these same users were equally keen to see the tool develop. We received comments which suggested that the design and the interface had become a little clunky over the years; ‘great idea, but underdeveloped’ was a theme that ran through much of the feedback. A number of users contacted us to suggest improvements and wish-lists of enhancements had been collated in many of the registered institutions. It was clear that Informs needed refreshing and updating to make it more appealing and relevant to today’s internet users.

#### **DEVELOPING INFORMS THROUGH COLLABORATION**

As work progressed on the essential administration and technical tasks associated with moving the software and the database of tutorials across to Manchester, we asked ourselves how we should begin to improve Informs for the future. We had already seen that the users were enthusiastic and dedicated to the concepts of shared content and cooperation so, as Informs was very much a community shared resource, the answer was simple. We agreed that the Informs users themselves would provide advice and guidance for the enhancement work.

One of our first tasks was to agree and prioritise a set of requirements. The first step to achieving this was to set up an advisory forum which was made up of experienced users from a range of

registered institutions. The advisory forum helped us to brainstorm a vision for the future of Informs, keeping an open mind and considering all possibilities and opportunities. The ideas generated ranged from technical enhancements, such as the integration of Web 2.0 functionality and the embedding of multimedia files, to improving the administration processes such as help, searching, browsing and statistics. We had far too many ideas to develop within the scope and duration of the initial transition project, so the potential developments were prioritised by the forum and then ranked by the wider Informs community via an online survey. The users asked us to look at the following enhancements:

- 1 Develop the self-test/quiz facility
- 2 Improve formatting in the editing interface
- 3 Introduce an image database
- 4 Develop a help facility
- 5 Improve the search facility
- 6 Develop a more user-friendly statistics interface
- 7 Introduce tagging within portfolios to improve the organisation of units
- 8 Introduce a ‘What’s New’ feature (e.g. e-mail updates, RSS, website)
- 9 Develop bulk editing of images
- 10 Introduce a rating facility for units.

By the time the initial project came to an end, we had introduced a range of developments, including enhancements to the formatting and quiz options; online help materials; improvements to the tutorial search, browse and statistics functions; and improved the access to and searching of the image database. However, we knew that there was more to do. We received a strong message from the user community who wanted to see Informs achieve its full potential in terms of growth, technical development and the development of a community of practice. In discussion with the advisory forum, we considered the future sustainability of the service, and submitted a proposal to the JISC for an additional phase of work.

#### **LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE**

We were delighted when funding for a second phase of the Informs project was granted in April 2008. During phase two, we will ensure we harness the enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise of Informs contributors to drive the developments. The new project has three main strands, all of which will take place in the context of ongoing user consultation: accessibility, functionality and community. A thorough assessment of the accessibility

of the tool is under way, and a range of changes will be implemented. Enhancements to functionality, identified by the advisory forum and the user survey, will be explored, and the introduction of a development server will allow us to elicit feedback and conduct user testing before the implementation of any changes. Some of the functionality that we will be investigating includes tagging and rating systems to improve the organisation and peer review of tutorials; customisation to give users greater control over the look and feel of the units; and RSS feeds to keep users up to date with new additions to the database.

We also hope to explore the vision of an Informs community of practice by running a series of seminars and introducing social networking tools. With the advisory forum, we agreed that the future of Informs would see a move towards users providing advice and guidance and sharing examples of good practice. Community events, organised and facilitated by users, have already begun this process. An exchange-of-experience day run by North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL) and facilitated by Lindsey Martin at Edge Hill University gave Informs users the opportunity to get together and share experiences and best practice, and to discuss their use of Informs in practice. A meeting of the North West Information Skills (NWIS) group similarly offered users a forum for discussion and cooperation, and we hope to extend this model to involve users across the UK.

#### CONCLUSIONS

We think that Informs has an exciting future. With continued investment from JISC, and ongoing development in collaboration with the community, we hope that its popularity will continue to grow.

If you would like to discuss Informs with us, or if you have any comments, please get in touch with any of the project team. You can find us at: <http://www.informs.intute.ac.uk/contact.html>.

#### REFERENCES

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- 2 For more information on the INHALE (Information for Nursing and Health in a Learning Environment) and the original INFORMS (Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences) projects, see: <http://inhale.hud.ac.uk/inhale/> and <http://inhale.hud.ac.uk/index.html>.

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# Celebrating 15 years of library collaboration

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2008 marks the 15th anniversary of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries – whose members work together for the benefit of London's learners and researchers. During this

time some key milestones have been achieved for libraries in London and the South East of England.

The Consortium is a great achievement in itself, with membership expanding to 58 institutions from libraries of the large multi-faculty institutions through to those with a specialised subject base. In 2002 membership was opened up to non-higher education organisations such as the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

So what have been the Consortium's key achievements?

#### Providing services to learners and researchers

- The M25 Access Scheme, which influenced the creation of SCONUL Access - a co-operative venture between higher education libraries to enable academic staff and students to borrow material from other libraries
- The Inform25 suite of services providing electronic access to the unrivalled collections within the Consortium, including 'Find a library', 'Visit a library', the Union List of Serials and the Search Catalogues service which allows users to simultaneously cross search forty catalogues.

#### Mutual support of member libraries in improving services to their users

- Through its Staff Development and Training Organisation called CPD25, the Consortium

provides high quality training and development, covering a wide range of issues tailored for library staff at different stages of their careers

- Produces resources and services to support staff in member libraries, including templates for Disaster Management and Service Level Definition.

### Collaboration and influence

- Acting as a single voice for its diverse membership, representing the interests of member libraries at regional and national level
- Building successful relationships with key organisations including the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and London Higher, influencing policy and promoting cross-sector collaboration.

Librarians and key players gathered at the House of Commons on 3 April 2008 to mark the 15th anniversary of the Consortium. The event was sponsored by Barry Sheerman, MP for Huddersfield, who is Chair of the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee, is an LSE governor and has recently won a campaign to save an historic local library from closure.

Hosting the reception the Consortium Chair, Nick Bevan, described the Consortium as a “great brand comprising a number of distinct strengths with ambitious plans to progress and develop new services.” He also paid tribute to the “hard work of very many people” that had ensured that the Consortium was now in “great shape”.

In his speech, the former Consortium Secretary Roy Williams highlighted the contributions made by previous officers, describing the Consortium as “truly more than the sum of its parts” and “a voluntary group that has developed a cooperative and egalitarian approach to resource sharing and service development – whilst maintaining and indeed enriching the integrity of its individual members.”



*Present and Former Chairs of the M25 Consortium  
L to R: Denis Heathcote, Robert Hall, Nick Bevan  
(Chair), Brian Murphy*



*Jean Sykes (Former Chair of the M25 Consortium) cuts  
the 15th Anniversary Cake with Nick Bevan present  
Chair.*

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# Widening participation: how do we measure up?



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In common with most other universities, the University of York is committed to widening participation in higher education. The university participates in a broad range of local, regional and national widening-participation initiatives, which are intended to raise aspirations and attainment levels among young people from neighbourhoods with historically low participation in higher education. The university has a widening participation strategy, which is available on our website.<sup>1</sup>

University libraries have generally been proactive in engaging with widening-participation initiatives at the institutional level. This article identifies some of the widening-participation developments that have taken place in libraries and explores how libraries can contribute to helping to break down some of the perceived barriers to higher education.

## HOW ARE LIBRARIES CONTRIBUTING?

Feedback from university libraries indicates that the involvement of the library in a widening-participation initiative can assist in helping to break down perceived barriers to higher education. Libraries can often present a 'friendly' face of the university – especially where school pupils (and their parents) are given the opportunity to explore the collections, experiment with online resources and handle interesting artefacts, such as archival materials.

A survey of activities in this area revealed a wealth of initiatives currently under way in university libraries.<sup>2</sup> Some institutions offer reference access for all secondary schools in the local

area, or for sixth-formers.<sup>3</sup> Visits can be formal – directly arranged with local teachers and with participation from library staff, who might offer tours, presentations and other activities – or informal, where school pupils can just turn up and use the collections. Frequent-user day passes might be issued to regular users of the library. There may be some restrictions placed around access – for example, some institutions may only allow reference access at certain times of the day, or may restrict access during exam periods.<sup>4</sup>

At the **University of York**, we have been running structured sessions for some local sixth forms for a number of years. These are arranged directly with a teacher, and usually take place during the university summer vacation, or towards the end of the summer term, when exams are drawing to a close. The sessions usually include a presentation from an academic liaison librarian, a tour of the library and the opportunity to browse the collections and make photocopies. In some cases we have also offered a structured exercise that aims to introduce pupils to different aspects of the library collections in an interesting and engaging way. Ongoing reference access is then available for pupils who want to come back and use the collections in their own time. Feedback from the schools involved has been very positive – the pupils enjoy their visit, are impressed by the range of resources available to them and are generally enthused by the experience. However, we have little evidence to show whether they come back to use the facilities on an ongoing basis, or that the experience has any longer-term impact on their later decisions to apply for university courses.

Our engagement with local schools so far has largely been on an ad hoc basis – the schools have tended to approach us and we have responded. The visits have not, so far, been linked to any wider strategy for the library service, or to wider university initiatives.

Initiatives often tend to be most successful when they are embedded into the wider programmes that take place at a university level. In this context, we have worked with the National Excellence Hub for Yorkshire and the Humber, which is based at the University of York.<sup>5</sup> The 'Young, Gifted and Talented' programme runs an annual summer school for pupils in the region, with a range of activities taking place involving academic departments. The library contributes to this programme through a specific programme on 'learning about health and illness', co-ordinated by our health sciences department. Library activities

have included tours, presentations and literature-searching activities structured around specific topics being covered in the summer school.

The Borthwick Institute for Archives<sup>6</sup> (part of the overall library service) at York has been closely involved with a number of initiatives with a widening-participation focus. The Borthwick is one of the biggest archive repositories outside London, and it has a wealth of archival materials, with a local and regional focus. As such it tends to be of considerable interest to local schools and teachers, and there is a strong synergy with existing work on community outreach. In 2007, the Borthwick hosted a number of visits from local primary schools. The children spent time with their teachers and an archivist in the archive search rooms, working with a range of documents including census materials from Victorian York.

The Borthwick has also produced a set of web-pages on equality and diversity issues using materials from the archives, which were utilized by local secondary school pupils, who then followed up with a visit to look at original documents.<sup>7</sup> These materials contain local histories taken from the archival records, plus photographs and scanned images of documents, resulting in a rich resource that is of great interest to local school pupils and their teachers.

The Borthwick also contributes to the National Excellence Hub activities, supporting the history department with sessions on seventeenth-century cause papers and slavery archives, and supporting science departments through providing tours of the conservation unit.

Other institutions have reported a wide range of different types of activities in support of widening participation.

The library at the **University of Huddersfield** has done a lot of work to develop a website aimed at years 7–11 (pupils aged 11–15), which includes a set of online information-skills tutorials. The material is intended to help pupils find books, archival resources and other information on specific subjects (including pointers to the Intute subject gateways and other free electronic resources).<sup>8</sup> Huddersfield is also a member of the a local scheme called 'Welcome', which is a partnership of libraries and information organisations in the Kirklees area of West Yorkshire, aimed at supporting adult learners and those returning to education.<sup>9</sup>

**Edinburgh University Library** contributes to a university widening-participation programme called LEAPS,<sup>10</sup> which includes a summer school. Summer-school pupils study two academic subjects, plus taking a compulsory learning skills course. The learning skills course includes the following topics:

- how to use the university library;
- time-management and reflective practice;
- academic writing;
- note-taking and reading;
- referencing and using evidence;
- delivering a successful presentation;
- effective exam preparation.

Pupils are expected to undertake an assignment which covers evidence across these skills. Edinburgh has also been offering an inter-library loan service for local schools.

The John Rylands University Library at the **University of Manchester** has developed a well-established widening-participation programme in support of university initiatives. The university runs a targeted access scheme (TAS), which recruits bright youngsters from deprived areas of the city. The scheme commences with a series of higher education awareness days aimed at different year groups. Year 10 pupils (aged 14) undertake an activity which involves completing a task to gain information on a specific topic from around the university and from the web – for example, using library resources to find information on famous Manchester graduates. Evening tours of the campus are also arranged – and, as part of this, the library offers tours to parents and pupils, including a tour of the special collections. A summer school is also held, and as part of this pupils do a more detailed research project in the library. They produce a poster and give a two-minute presentation on their topic.<sup>11</sup>

A number of institutions – including Manchester and the University of the West of England – have made efforts to provide access to electronic resources, where licence agreements permit this. This can be quite complex, as it involves a detailed study of the various e-resource licences to identify which services permit access by walk-in users, and the setting up of systems to control access.

The library at the **University of the West of England** is part of a schools-link project which is developing mentoring arrangements between black and minority ethnic children and students from similar backgrounds. As part of the pro-



gramme, the pupils visit the library and explore the activities going on within the building. This is intended to stimulate discussion on what it means to be a student and what it must be like, as well as questions about the library and studying. The pupils are also introduced to the Intute Virtual Training Suite,<sup>12</sup> and encouraged to think about tips and techniques for finding information. Library staff also work closely with school librarians, and go into local schools to work with pupils on information-searching strategies.<sup>13</sup>

A wide range of other approaches at different institutions have been reported, including Saturday schools in the summer holidays, use of student mentors to support library and other staff, remote training in information literacy and seminars for school librarians.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, some 90 per cent of university libraries in England have now registered with the INSPIRE partnership, contributing to widening participation through allowing free reference access to their print resources for all. The INSPIRE partnership also supports collaboration between the education and public library sectors to encourage and support lifelong learning.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting approach comes from the university library at the **University of Wolverhampton**, who arrange an annual 18-hour 'sleepover' in the library for 12–14-year-olds from the region.<sup>16</sup> Pupils spend a night in the library, with their teachers and some library staff. During this time, they use the library space to get involved in a variety of activities, including producing music and artwork, working on library computers to search for relevant information, making a radio broadcast and putting together a photography exhibition. The pupils sleep in the library (between the shelves!), and food and drink are provided. The following morning, pupils give a presentation on their activities and experiences to their teachers and parents. The intention is to break down the barriers to higher education, by encouraging schoolchildren to see the university as a non-threatening and friendly environment, where they can have fun as well as doing some learning. The library provides an ideal venue for this to take place as the pupils have access to a wealth of resources in comfortable and welcoming surroundings that are conducive to group and individual study.

## ARE WE HAVING AN IMPACT?

Surprisingly little has been written so far on the actual impact of the involvement of libraries in widening participation activities. It is very difficult to track the extent to which widening-participation activities really do make a difference.

In 2006, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) produced a report on the impact of widening-participation activities. This indicated that there was considerable evidence that widening-participation initiatives have an impact on learners' aspirations and interest in entering higher education, and also on parents' attitudes to higher education. However, there is little research that has been done so far on whether these aspirations are then translated into improved long-term attainment, although a number of longitudinal studies on this are now taking place.<sup>17</sup>

The University of the West of England has undertaken some evaluation of its activities with local teachers, who have indicated that their pupils have been helped considerably by having training sessions on information-seeking that have raised their awareness of the need to critically evaluate information sources and identify quality information. Teachers felt that this had both raised attainment levels and also given the pupils a good grounding for when they arrive at university, thus indirectly supporting student retention in the longer term.<sup>18</sup>

Other libraries have also attempted to track the impact of their involvement in widening-participation initiatives. For example, the University of Huddersfield tracks the correlation between library cards issued to local schoolchildren and later applications to the university. Manchester has attempted to undertake some formal evaluation through analysing data from access-control systems to identify regular use of the library by local school pupils. This is also tracked to applications to the university via a university widening-participation database.<sup>19</sup> One difficulty with this approach is that pupils may not always apply to the local university that they visited during a widening-participation initiative, so an analysis of local applications will not give the true picture of the overall impact; other methods, including longitudinal studies, will be required.

## WHAT NEXT?

At York, we plan to further develop our widening-participation activities as a coherent strategy, working much more closely with the university to embed our activities within institutional programmes. Key activities for the future include the proposed development of a learning skills module for local schools, extending the reference-access scheme, a possible joint 'open day' with the Borthwick Institute and introducing walk-in access to electronic resources from autumn 2008. We also intend to do more to track the impact of our activities – starting with follow-up discussions with local schoolteachers about the longer-term impact of library visits on their pupils. We'd be interested in exploring options for local collaboration, and in sharing experiences on local and national levels, especially in relation to gathering evidence on impact.

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# Reflections on a benchmarking survey of research support provided by 1994 Group libraries



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## INTRODUCTION

In April 2007, the Research Information Network (RIN) and Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL) published their joint report into researchers' use of academic libraries and their services.<sup>1</sup> This national study raised the profile of research support offered within university libraries, whilst identifying the challenges for librarians and researchers in ensuring effective provision in this key area. Whilst a national survey is very useful for identifying trends and behaviours, a national report includes the Russell Group universities, whose resources and ethos are significantly different from those at Loughborough, so we felt that benchmarking the 1994 Group of 19 internationally renowned research intensive universities<sup>2</sup> best represented our sector and would yield the most meaningful comparisons; a survey was therefore carried out in late 2007.<sup>3</sup> In this article we describe briefly the methodology and the key findings of this study and add to it by reflecting on the opportunities for further investigation into the increasingly important provision of research support.

## METHODOLOGY

There are 19 institutions currently within the 1994 Group and, as the benchmarking survey was undertaken alongside the other duties of the research support team, it was decided that mainly quantitative data should be produced by the survey. To ensure that the questions related to current practice in the majority of the institutions, the websites of the libraries of all of the 1994 Group were scanned, along with a selection of Russell Group libraries which had research interests similar to those at Loughborough. This enabled us to identify the main areas of research support currently offered across the range of institutions and to structure the survey.

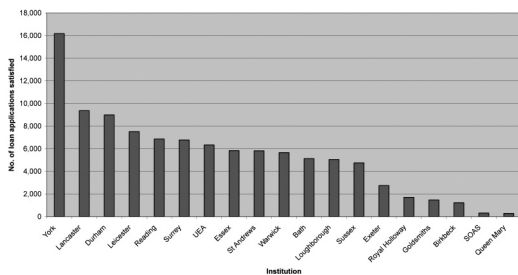
Once the key sections of the survey had been identified, an electronic survey was constructed using UCCASS<sup>4</sup> open source software. It was piloted on colleagues at Loughborough and at Stirling University. Most of the questions invited 'tick box' answers, with space for comment provided at the end of the questionnaire. The academic year 2005–2006 was chosen as the survey year since the data would both be readily available and could be used in conjunction with latest published SCONUL statistics.<sup>5</sup> These statistics were used where relevant to minimise the intrusion on respondents' time. Fourteen responses were received (a response rate of 79%), from the university libraries of Bath, Birkbeck, Durham, Exeter, Goldsmiths, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, Queen Mary, Reading, St Andrews, Surrey, Sussex and York.

## KEY FINDINGS

### *Obtaining materials*

Increasing investment in e-journal provision has reduced the frequency with which researchers visit their libraries and, as both a Loughborough e-journal survey<sup>6</sup> and a RIN survey<sup>7</sup> identified, researchers use a variety of methods to obtain material not available in their own library. Although inter-library lending (ILL) is declining in the numbers of items fulfilled, due to increased availability of electronic full text, SCONUL statistics<sup>8</sup> show that document supply continues to be an important service provided by libraries for researchers. The inter-library loans provided by each 1994 Group library can be compared in Table 1. Drives to make the ILL process more efficient and effective tend to focus on electronic ordering and delivery, and we wanted to know how well established this had become across the 1994 Group.

Table 1  
Interlibrary loans applications satisfied 2005/06



Since the Electronic Communications Act 2000, the acceptance of electronic signatures, as opposed to written personal signatures, has been a moot point within libraries.<sup>9</sup> Some libraries insist on personal signatures for all inter-library loans before requests can be fulfilled. It was therefore interesting to note that 10 of the 14 respondents permitted electronic requests for inter-library loans from their users. Unfortunately our survey did not identify at which point the users would need to physically sign to obtain the item or if electronic signatures were used, and this is an area which we intend to follow up to inform our own service.

Secure Electronic Delivery (SED) was only well established in three of the libraries, although one reported that it was used for 100 per cent of staff requests. We wonder why this is so when both the RIN survey<sup>10</sup> and our own in-house survey last year<sup>11</sup> demonstrated that many researchers prefer accessing journals electronically rather than using the print equivalent. It could be linked to internal marketing within libraries or it could be that the restrictions imposed by the service are off-putting to the user. It is an area that merits further investigation and one which we intend to take forward in our next survey of our own researchers.

One of the services that had been identified as being offered in one of the Russell Group libraries – and that, anecdotally, was popular with their researchers – was the delivery of newly purchased books or inter-library loan books to a researcher's departmental address. At the moment this service is not offered by any of the 1994 Group libraries that responded to the questionnaire but we would be very interested to know how many other universities beyond the 1994 Group are offering this service, so that we can assess the feasibility and popularity of such a service.

#### Mediated searching of databases

Mediated searching of 'pay as you use' databases from hosts such as Questel-Orbit and Dialog was offered by four universities out of the 14 respondents and, of these, only two fulfilled more than

ten searches in 2005–2006. However, mediated searching of 'free at point of use' databases was also offered at four institutions, with all of these reporting more than 20 searches in 2005–2006. We suspect that this mismatch in popularity is linked to the fact that the 'pay as you use' databases are much lower-profile and are niche products, whilst the 'free at point of use' ones are providing more of the information that researchers need on a regular basis, but that the researchers are too time-pressured to be able to do their own research. We followed up these results with the institution with the highest number of searches and found that the researchers requesting these services were from two specific medical-related areas, one of which was staffed by practitioners who would not have the time to do such work. It was also interesting to note that this institution's policy was to move away from mediated searching where possible.

#### Special collections

Although special collections are not an immediate priority for Loughborough, we felt that others in the 1994 Group might be interested to see to what extent others were involved in digitisation projects. Of the 14 institutions that responded, six had digitised some of their special collections. The majority of institutions also had plans to digitise at least some of their collections, although only two had the funds in place. Only four institutions stated that they had no plans for digitisation. This illustrates the importance that libraries are placing on increasing access to their collections and how it goes across a wide range of institutions. The fact that so few had funds in place is interesting, if not surprising. The will to digitise is definitely there, but not the finance.

#### Electronic reference

Although e-reference products are used by a range of users within an institution, our experience has shown that they are often requested by researchers who no longer want to travel to the library building to use the traditional, printed reference collection. We wanted an indication as to how much libraries were investing in e-reference and our results showed big differences between institutions. In 2005–2006, the majority of our respondents (8) spent over £20,000 on electronic reference materials; two spent between £10,001 and 20,000; one spent between £5,001 and £10,000; and three spent less than £5,000.

Unfortunately (and naturally) this does not tell us to what extent researchers are using these products, or even to what extent any users are using the services. The higher expenditure could

be linked to the purchase of large services, such as the suite of Oxford Reference Online products, which are not all necessarily aimed at researchers and in some cases could be seen as an attempt to wean students away from reliance on Wikipedia. In retrospect, it might have been more helpful to benchmark against specific products that are aimed more specifically at researchers, such as the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

#### *Reference management*

Bibliographic software is becoming increasingly important and familiar to researchers. In some institutions the software itself might be provided by IT departments but the support, as our survey results showed, is usually offered by the library. All of the respondents actively supported at least one product.

The most popular software was Endnote, which was provided by 12 institutions, and its cut-down web version offered by ISI, Endnote Web, was also offered by seven institutions. Refworks and Reference Manager were both offered by three institutions. Nine institutions offered their users a choice of two or more products, although only five actively supported more than one. It would be interesting to follow this up to find out how much support the five provide for more than one product. The reliance on Endnote is also worth noting and it would be helpful to know if this was a decision based on functionality or whether it is simply historic. It is also useful for institutions which do not currently have Endnote to be aware that researchers coming in from elsewhere might need some extra support to get used to a new system, if they are prepared to use it.

#### *Training available to researchers*

Training of researchers from PhD level upwards received added incentive after the Roberts Review.<sup>12</sup> Indeed one of the respondents mentioned Roberts-funded sessions as one type of training offered. The survey results indicated that a wide range of training was available via the 1994 Group libraries.

All 14 institutions offered literature-searching training, with bibliographic software/reference management training provided by 12. Current-awareness training was the next most popular session, with 10 institutions providing this. Five institutions offered training on how to get the most from the Web or Web 2.0. It was interesting to note that topics that are not traditionally seen as library-based are also being provided by the libraries. These included avoiding plagiarism

(offered by 4 libraries), where to publish (2), copyright (2) and institutional repositories (2). Other topics, each offered by one library, were:

- special-collection awareness
- open-access publishing
- an introduction to e-journals
- self-assessment and career choices
- marking and giving feedback
- careers inside and outside academia
- CVs and applications and interview skills.

All except one library offered researchers training on more than one topic. The greatest number of topics offered was over nine, including a session on 'who's citing whom', which is a topic that might increase in popularity, depending on decisions about the format of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). This shows to what extent many librarians are having to develop their skills beyond the traditional information-literacy remit and it would be interesting to follow this up again in a few years' time to see to what extent it continues to change.

#### *Dedicated research space*

One question that was recently raised by a Loughborough researcher was about the availability of dedicated research space, since a couple of years ago we dedicated one of our levels to an area called Open 3. This is a space where users can work, eat, drink and talk and it is predominately used by students. It has made some researchers feel a bit uncomfortable, as it is so alien to the traditional view of a research library, whilst others love the fact that it has made the library so lively! Our survey showed that the availability of research space within the libraries was quite mixed. The most common form of dedicated research space provided by the libraries, apart from open reading places, was the group study room, which was available in 11 of the 14 responding libraries and could be booked in advance at 8 of these. Groups rooms were only available exclusively for researchers in two institutions.

Individual study rooms were available in seven libraries and could be booked in advance in five. They were for the exclusive use of researchers in only one institution. In the majority of libraries, 11 out of the 14, there was no research space reserved exclusively for researchers, and three libraries did not have any individual study rooms, group study rooms or space which they consider to be equivalent to this. It would be interesting to investigate this aspect further to discover how researchers in the institutions felt about this situation and

whether it is a result of the libraries responding to the lack of visits from researchers or whether the researchers do not feel that the library has the appropriate space to attract them to visit.

#### *Support for the RAE*

Given the funds that rest on a successful Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) submission, it is unsurprising that library support for them was offered by most libraries. The most popular form of support was finding bibliographic data (9 libraries) and nine libraries also offered advice on how to find Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs), which were a feature of RAE2008. Help on how to publish was offered by two libraries. Other assistance included collation of data, hard-copy sources and the training of administrators. As the RAE preparation is now history and institutions await the result, librarians will need to keep watching the developments with the REF to decide how to adapt their services to the new environment.

#### *Results on dedicated research support librarians*

With research support increasing in prominence within libraries, we wanted to know how many libraries had employed a dedicated research support librarian. Five universities indicated that they had someone whose role was dedicated to research support, and again it would be good to take this investigation further to find out exactly what their role entailed and to see if this number increases over time. From our survey it is not possible to determine whether these libraries are more effective in research support and clearly the other libraries may see their pre-existing staffing structures as robust enough to support research effectively.

#### *Management of research outputs*

The survey results suggested strongly that the open-access movement was supported by the majority of the respondents. Most respondents (12 out of 14) stored research papers electronically and a further one is launching its institutional repository in spring 2008. However, whilst institutional repositories are increasingly commonplace, the survey showed that submission of electronic theses and research data was relatively rare. Only two of the institutions had electronic theses available and only two were storing research data. As the storage of data on open access is a subject that has only recently become high-profile and is contentious within some subject areas because of ethical and technical concerns, these results were not surprising.<sup>13</sup>

With hindsight we should have obtained data on the numbers of full-text papers contained in each institutional repository to determine how well stocked they were and should also have discovered to what extent submission of each type of document is mandated by the institutions. When we looked at a sample of the institutional repositories in March 2008, we found that the numbers of items stored ranged from 301 to 2,697.

#### *Support for e-research*

One area that appears to be a bit of mystery to librarians is support for e-research. Is it, or should it be, any different to the support that is provided to individual researchers in a department or not? The responses to our open questions showed that there is little to indicate that libraries have revolutionised their service provision to accommodate e-research so far. Most responses demonstrated the same approach as applied to 'normal' research. Two comments may suggest that e-research is also being viewed as a slightly different area, however:

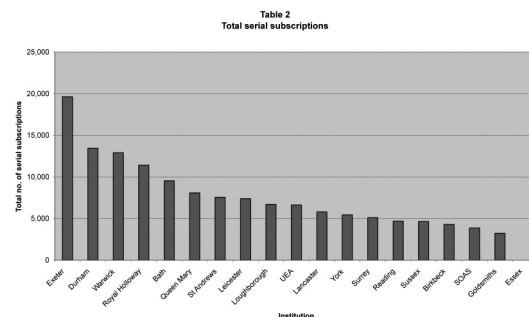
'Under discussion with research departments but support underdeveloped at present'

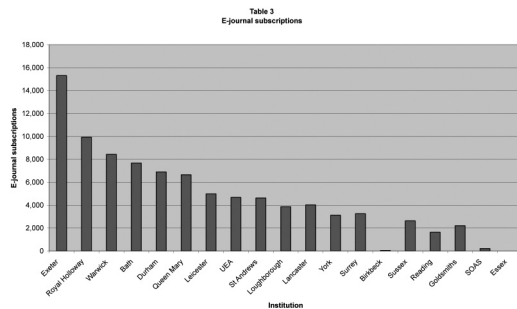
'Assistance with individual research-related enquiries. However, we are planning to offer an entirely new research-orientated library facility within the next few years.'

This is an area on which we will be keeping a watching brief.

### **SCONUL STATISTICS**

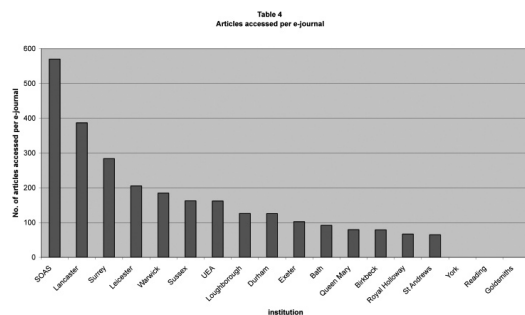
Moving away from the survey itself, the annual SCONUL statistics for serials, inter-library loans and e-journal downloads were examined to see the quantity of e-journals available in the different libraries, with the inter-library-loan totals and downloads being taken as indicators as to the effectiveness or quality of the titles. It is interesting to note the variations in number of serials across 1994 Group libraries. See Table 2 for total serial subscriptions and Table 3 for e-journal subscriptions. (Figures are included for all the 1994 Group libraries, not just those that responded to the questionnaire.)





These figures, of course, reflect an institution's mix of courses and strength in science and technology subjects will tend to lead to high numbers of electronic subscriptions due to researcher demand. A medical or law school will also ensure that it fulfils the need to supply large numbers of titles.

The e-journal downloads are a new feature in SCONUL statistics this year and an attempt has been made to measure the impact of e-journal subscriptions by dividing the number of successful downloads by the number of e-journals. This measure could be used to indicate how effective academic libraries are either in choosing appropriate titles to support their researchers or in guiding researchers to articles they need (perhaps using and promoting link resolver technology). Table 4 shows how our libraries fare in this and illustrates that a smaller number of carefully chosen journals can be very effective in providing researchers with what they need.



It has been pointed out that, traditionally, research libraries have been measured by the strength of their collections and recently e-journal bundles have provided a useful 'long tail' of journals to develop collections in areas that would not necessarily have been financed before, and that sometimes attract surprising levels of use.

### CONCLUSION

We found the benchmarking survey to be a very helpful exercise for scoping the landscape of research support in the libraries of the 1994 Group and for supplying us with data to identify our own library's strengths and weaknesses. We hope

that the other 1994 Group libraries have also been able to use it to refine or improve their practice. It has provided us with the foundations to focus in on specific areas that need more thorough investigation and to look more closely at the quality of our support. Therefore on a practical level we now have a long list of recommendations to guide our next year's operational plan, completion of which will ensure that we achieve an enhanced level of research support. Having undertaken this benchmarking survey, we now know that this support will be comparable to, or better than, that in universities of a similar size and ethos to our own.

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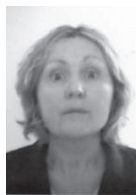
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# Grazing the long acre – distance students in Equine Science using the Glucksman Library at the University of Limerick



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## INTRODUCTION

This article reports on a pilot library-support service offered to undergraduate Equine Science distance students in University of Limerick. The service, which began in 2001, started as a postal, e-mail and telephone service and evolved to include providing access to web-based resources. The title of this article refers to the practice in Ireland in the not too distant past whereby people who did not own land grazed their animals by the roadside, known as 'the long acre'. Likewise today, it might be argued that non-traditional students study on the fringes of universities, attending outside what are core hours. Nowadays new technologies offer the potential for those studying at a distance to have access to a similar range of resources to traditional students.

The article explores where the equine science distance students are coming from professionally and academically. It outlines their programmes of study and examines how they use the library to meet their coursework needs. The service to these students is examined in the context of borrowing patterns and use of online and other materials.





#### **EQUINE SCIENCE DEGREE HISTORY**

The Equine Science degree programme was first offered by the University of Limerick in 1992. The importance of the industry to the Irish economy was highlighted by University of Limerick Life Sciences lecturer Frank McGourty (1996),<sup>1</sup> who led the development of the new programme. His inspiration came from Lord Killanin's report on the Irish equine industry,<sup>2</sup> which recommended that a course of study be provided for students wishing to follow a professional career in the horse industry because of the strategic economic importance of the horse and related industries in Ireland.

This need to produce highly qualified personnel with the specialised knowledge to exploit the potential of equine industries still exists in 2008. Additionally, the social and therapeutic importance of the equine industry in areas such as family-bonding, friendship-building, group cohesion and individual development are increasingly being recognised.<sup>3</sup>

#### **EQUINE PROGRAMMES**

The structure of the distance equine science programme offers flexibility to students. Individual link-in modules can be studied without a commitment to a course of study culminating in an academic qualification. Undergraduate certificate and diploma courses are on offer to distance students. Students can study at a distance to certificate and

diploma level and then come on campus to join day students to complete a BSc, Masters and PhD in Equine Science.

A certificate by distance learning comprises 12 modules. A further 8 modules must be taken to complete a diploma in equine science by distance learning. Subjects include equine anatomy and physiology, reproduction, health and disease, nutrition, genetics and grassland and grazing. Electives include French and German language modules, marketing, equine performance and equitation. Some modules overlap with other disciplines.

#### **DISTANCE EQUINE SCIENCE STUDENTS PROFILE**

Students are drawn to the course from all parts of the island of Ireland. They are mainly in the 23+ age cohort. While students are mostly personnel drawn from the horse industry – such as stable hands, jockeys, veterinary surgeons – other professions represented include legal, financial and pharmaceutical students. One student is a clinical psychologist who has an interest in working with horses with behavioural difficulties. He has found being able to do the course by distance and to continue with his current employment a major plus of the programme. A significant number of homemakers study equine science by distance learning and some retired people study it as a leisure interest. The number enrolled at any given time on the distance programme is approximately 110.

While full-time equine science students are mainly male, distance students are mainly female.

Some students have little or no formal education. They bring to the course the advantage of practical experience in areas such as horsemanship, breeding and folk medicine. As these students participate in coursework the wealth of their knowledge can be documented and shared with others, their study confirming effective practices in place through the ages and across cultures.



## STUDENT ENCOUNTERS WITH THE LIBRARY

*'A distance learning student should not have a sense of doing things from far away. In fact, the University of Limerick, through the IEI, offers a range of learner support networks, both formal and informal.'* (International Equine Institute, 2008)<sup>4</sup>

Equine science distance students are on campus twice a year for library orientation and information skills training. Their modules are delivered within the Sulis<sup>5</sup> virtual learning environment, which is in use throughout University of Limerick; these students were one of the first groups to adopt this VLE.



Outside of this, the students contact the library by telephone, e-mail and papermail. They are supported by a dedicated equine science distance librarian and library assistant. They are provided with support to search databases for reading material and any other coursework-related queries. Most queries are dealt with by telephone. The 'UL Library Equine Distance Students News' blog,<sup>6</sup> managed by the distance librarian, is used to post answers to students' questions. The students generally use the blog for queries relating to finding information for their assignments, for links to various information sources and as a permanent source of reference to the support offered by the librarian. The availability of the blog around the clock is really useful, as many stu-

dents will do their coursework outside of normal working hours.

The students need the material from their reading lists. Many journal articles and some books are available online via the library databases. Where students do not have online access the library will post the reading material in print format. Inter-library loan from the British Library is used occasionally, with books being forwarded by post. BL articles are supplied and forwarded to students by post and secure electronic document delivery.<sup>7</sup>

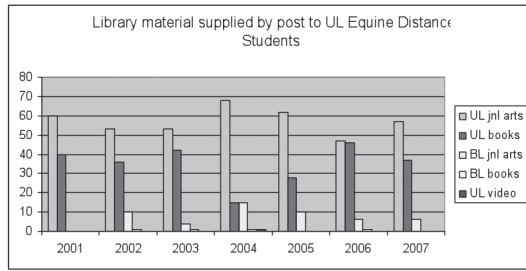
Science Direct, SPORTDiscus and Blackwell Synergy are the most frequently used databases, along with Web of Science, Medline and PsycINFO. Core journals used by students are in the subject areas of horsemanship and veterinary science.

## TRENDS IN THE USE OF RESOURCES

The chart below shows trends in usage of material. When the distance support service began in 2001 there was no remote access to electronic journals, 60% of requests from students were for copies of articles from material UL subscribes to. During 2002, 53% of requests were for material UL subscribes to, while 10% were articles from the British Library. As the equine science distance students progressed to their second year of study, UL-subscribed journal titles could not meet the requirements of the reading lists and were supplemented with BL inter-library loan. During 2003 articles from the UL collection posted to students stayed constant at 53% and BL articles supplied fell to 4%. This could be explained by the provision of off-campus access to electronic journals for the first time that year.

By 2004 the Irish Research electronic Library (IREL) project made even more databases and full-text journals available to students. The demand for copies of articles was at its highest, 68% of requests were from material UL subscribes to and 15% were ordered from the British Library. This could be explained by students advancing to higher levels of study within the distance equine degree and reading more subject material online, which increased the numbers of articles referenced but not available in full-text. In 2005 articles from material UL subscribes to fell back a little to 62%, as did BL paper articles, to 10%. This could be accounted for by more electronic journals becoming available online. The trend of falling demand for paper articles from UL resources continued in 2006, with 47% UL articles and 6% BL paper articles being requested.

Positive results from online resources provision are that the students are reading more academic journal articles. This is evidenced in the first half of 2007, when the demand for print copies of journal material UL subscribes to increased to 57%. These requests arise from references where full-text is not available online. At present it is not possible to measure the number of electronic articles read by distance equine science students, although it is clear they continue to request print full-text articles in addition to reading other articles online.



Students require a significant number of books on horsemanship and veterinary science. Most books are currently provided by post. The chart above shows books as a percentage of the paper material supplied by post to students of the last seven years. In 2001 books comprised 40% of material posted to students, dropping to 36% in 2002 and again dropping from 42% in 2003 to 15% in 2004. The figure rose to 28% in 2005 and 46% in 2006. The troughs in supply reflect where books in stock could not meet the demand by full-time and distance students. At present there is no arrangement to set aside books for use by distance students only. More paper books are needed per capita for distance students because of the time taken to post them to and from the library. The peaks reflect where book stock was increased to meet that demand.

It is not yet known what impact the availability of Wiley e-books, such as *Analyzing Gene Expression*<sup>8</sup> will have on the demand for paper books among equine science students. It will be useful when it is possible to measure equine science distance students' usage of UL electronic resources at a later date.



## CONCLUSION

This diverse group of students has adapted to new technologies in order to complete their coursework at a distance. Library resources are requested mainly by e-mail and telephone and delivered by post or e-mail or posted on the blog. Students also access electronic journals and some e-books from home. Even though the provision of more online resources has increased the amount of material accessed by students, they are still requesting as much on paper as before. It could be argued that these distance students are receiving an equivalent quality of service to those who are full-time on campus because the volume of material they are requesting for their studies has increased dramatically due to the ever-increasing availability of online material.



Distance learning and library support will continue in the future and will become more flexible as life-long learning is an expanding area of education. The demand for education by people of all ages who want to study and continue to work at the same time will grow. The present generation of distance students are pushing the boundaries of educational achievement because of the power of online education. The next wave of distance students will be the net generation, who prefer technology-based learning to sitting in a lecture theatre at a prescribed time.<sup>9</sup> This bodes well for the future of distance learning and the role of the librarian online.

There is a need to communicate economically and efficiently with students who may work at a distance from college in future. Providing relevant library resources via the web is would be one effective way to do this. Podcasting is one option to improve this service; creating webinars is another. The capacity of mobile telephones with computing ability is currently a platform for enabling all students to receive educational material

and library resources that are available electronically. This trend of increasing web-based library service to distance students may offer greater flexibility to all students in future.

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## Front-line service delivery: responding to changing user needs and patterns of library usage at NUI Maynooth



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#### BACKGROUND

Academic libraries have undergone significant changes in recent years. Emerging trends include increasing diversification of the student body, more student-centred learning and increasing use of information technology and information communication technology in how programmes and curricula are developed and delivered. Coupled with this, the provision of a library service and the way information is organised and delivered have changed dramatically in recent years.

Over the academic years from 2004 to 2007, statistics and user feedback at the John Paul II Library, National University of Ireland Maynooth, highlighted how these trends were impacting on library service delivery, library usage and the needs and expectations of library users. Users were no longer depending completely on traditional print services and were increasingly using electronic services.

The library recognised the need to support this hybrid usage and evolved to meet users' needs. We wanted to build on existing staff skills and to strengthen the library's role in the learning environment. To do this, the services team reviewed the delivery of front-line services and also sought to implement some of the more specific actions set out in the strategic plan:

'Evaluate and revise accordingly, the effectiveness of staff roles and the organisational structure in response to the changing needs of users.'

'Continue to develop self-service facilities.'

'Continue to upgrade public access equipment and maintain pace with technological developments.'

This article outlines the process of this review and the changes that were made in response to this new environment within the parameters of a library building built in 1984.

#### **VISION**

Traditionally, library desk services were delivered via four distinct service desks:

- 1 admissions desk, dealing with the access gates/controlled access and related issues
- 2 circulation desk, dealing with all circulation-related issues
- 3 copy centre, dealing with issues related to PCs, printers, photocopiers and microfilm reader/printers
- 4 information desk, dealing with all enquiries not handled by any of the other desks.

It became essential to find new ways of aligning these traditional library services with the changing library-usage patterns. This challenge forced us to consider a more suitable model of service delivery. A further aspect of the library that we were keen to develop was the concept of how 'library space' is used. The library building has three floors, with levels two and three predominantly used for quiet study. All photocopiers, printers and library desk services are located on level one, which has evolved into a lively group-study area attracting significant numbers of students. In our vision we were mindful of capitalising on this development.

Our vision was to re-deploy staff to provide a more effective service delivery model. To do this we moved towards a three pronged approach:

- 1 move all borrowing and returning to self-service
- 2 merge all our existing desks into one desk
- 3 make staff more available by introducing a roving support service.

#### **CONSULTATION**

A six-month lead-in allowed numerous meetings with staff to discuss these issues in detail. A training programme was planned and delivered in a two-week period in September 2007, when staff were trained in all aspects of the new merged service. Numerous meetings took place to continue to get feedback from staff throughout the implementation of the new service. All library staff, including those not involved in front-line service delivery, were consulted to gather a wide range of thoughts on how best to develop and plan this new model of service delivery.

#### **BORROWING AND RETURNING**



*Library user and staff member using the borrowing and returning service*

Funding was secured to purchase two machines. Finding the most strategic location for the new machines was the next decision. Following consultation with the stakeholders, such as staff, our systems department, health and safety and the buildings office, one of our existing desks was removed and the new self-service machines were installed in that space. The whole process, from ordering the machines to installing them in this location, took five months, from April to September 2007. We are the first library in Ireland to move towards this model and we are very satisfied with our decision.

#### **LIBRARY SPACE**

As was mentioned earlier, level one has become a hub of activity in the library. A regular request from library users was for tea/coffee and snack vending machines to be introduced. The opportunity arose for a branch of a café franchise already on campus to move into our library and we seized it. Level one now has a coffee dock area, serving snacks, sandwiches and hot and cold drinks. The feedback from this move has been very positive.

## MERGING OF DESKS

Following the installation of two self-service machines, our attention turned to the merging of the existing library desks. In particular we focused on the added-value features we hoped to achieve by merging existing services and freeing up staff time to provide roving support on the floors.

As the traditional circulation desk was the largest desk and also was the first desk that library users saw when they entered the library, we decided that it would become the 'base' desk on level one.

### NEW IDENTITY

An immediate concern was how the new 'team' would be identified. Staff made a number of suggestions and it was finally agreed that the team would be known as the 'i Team', using the international symbol for information. Staff also were involved in the design of a badge which they would wear when on duty to identify themselves to the users.

### ROVING SUPPORT SERVICE



*Member of 'i Team' offering roving support*

'Students are on a more one-to-one basis with staff.' (Library staff comment)

All our desks had been located on level one in the library and users had to come to us for help. User feedback highlighted a need for support on the floors, with further confirmation of this need coming from the shelving staff, who regularly get asked for help. With this in mind we created bases on both level two and level three and offered roving support. Staff who were traditionally fixed to a desk were now free to rove. In practice this meant that staff could go with a library user to support them at point of need, whether that be at a photocopier, to a PC or to the shelves.

## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION CHART

Dates	Objectives and actions
<b>Consultation</b> June 2006 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff meetings</li> <li>• Management Team approval</li> <li>• Survey of library users</li> <li>• Visit to Information Commons, University of Sheffield</li> </ul>
<b>Borrowing and returning</b> Summer 2006 – September 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demos and tender process</li> <li>• Funding secured</li> <li>• Visits to other libraries</li> <li>• Delivery and testing</li> <li>• Removal of one traditional desk</li> <li>• Installation</li> </ul>
<b>Library space</b> September 2006 – February 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tender process with catering</li> <li>• Site survey</li> <li>• Installation of coffee dock</li> </ul>
<b>Roving support</b> August 2007 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location</li> <li>• Laptops</li> <li>• Desks</li> <li>• Mobile phones</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b> September 2007 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-week training programme</li> <li>• Continuous upskilling</li> <li>• On the job training</li> <li>• Follow-up meetings</li> </ul>
<b>Identity</b> September 2007 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name of desks and team</li> <li>• Badges</li> <li>• Signage</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation</b> September 2007 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics</li> <li>• Meetings with staff</li> <li>• Survey of library users</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing</b> October 2007 – ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website &amp; Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)</li> <li>• Self-service promotion</li> <li>• Visits from colleagues in other libraries</li> <li>• Articles</li> </ul>

### WHAT WE LEARNED

#### *Training*

'Change always presents challenge and many, if not all, of front-line staff are coming to grips with a wide variety of tasks and information as a result of the desk merge.' (Library staff comment)

The same level of training was delivered to all staff, regardless of their existing experience. Less-experienced staff have opportunities to develop their skills. Initially, more experienced staff felt de-motivated. To address these issues a mentoring

scheme was introduced, whereby more experienced staff could support staff with less experience. In the future we need to develop a strategy for introducing new members to the team.

#### *Team dynamics*

Managing the merging of four teams who had traditionally had their own areas of responsibility into one cohesive team was a challenge. There was a loss of original identity, leading to some confusion about roles, and some staff felt a loss of job ownership. Innovating this culture of change was challenging. However, the enthusiasm of staff in taking on these changes is commendable, as is their willingness to 'try things out'. The role of the desk supervisor in managing these changes on the ground is a significant one and again her input and contribution is invaluable. In retrospect, one suggestion might be for staff at the start of these changes to complete a workshop/seminar designed to raise awareness of the effect of change.

#### *Scale of the project*

The planning and implementation of these changes were very time-intensive. Managing the implementation phase is ongoing and is taking as much time as the planning and consultation phase. The fact that we are still 'tweaking' the service is frustrating at times. That said, a slower and evolving process allows greater flexibility in responding to feedback from both staff and users, in our experience.

#### *Marketing*

It became obvious early on that marketing our new services was essential. Having a dedicated member of staff to market the borrowing and returning service was vital during the initial stages. We had a draw with an MP3 player as prize for users of this service. We promoted our new services in our campus library newsletter, library website and our VLE. Signage is on order for all the new services. Our library survey carried out in December 2007 clearly indicated awareness among students of the areas we marketed and areas in need of further marketing.

#### **CONCLUSION**

'Initially I thought it wouldn't work. It took a while to adapt but now a few months in I think it is of great benefit to staff and students. Staff is far more flexible, have a much broader knowledge of all library services and ultimately we can help our students in areas where we previously couldn't. We can now offer a much more consistent infor-

mation and 'hands on' service.' (Library staff comment)

Over the past year numerous changes have taken place at the library in NUI Maynooth. These include the merging of desk services, the transition of all borrowing and returning to self-service and the introduction of a roving support service. These developments have taken much time, effort and resources to introduce, more than was initially anticipated.

Further consultation will take place with staff and users to evaluate the new services and to highlight areas for improving and strengthening. One idea being considered is the introduction of printing and borrowing and returning services on level two and level three. Informal networking with other libraries has indicated a general uncertainty about the roving model. The future may see a different model emerging.

Overall, this has been an exciting process for all involved and we feel we are on the right path towards addressing and responding to changing user needs and emerging trends in academic libraries.

#### **FURTHER READING**

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# From 'How satisfied are you?' to 'Tell us what matters': user evaluation at the Wellcome Library



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To make any meaningful attempt to evaluate a user experience, it is vital to let the users express what matters to them, and to avoid making any assumptions. It is also important to continually seek out negative user experiences and address them. Improving negatively perceived services can have an explosive effect in terms of meaningful dialogue, and it rapidly builds a community of users.

## THE PROBLEM WITH SATISFACTION

At the Wellcome Library we had conducted annual satisfaction surveys for some years and were pleased with, but also slightly sceptical about, the high satisfaction ratings. We felt that there must be areas where we could improve, and we knew anecdotally that our users did have issues to raise. We were concerned that because we were creating the questions there was a risk of bias. Were we asking the users to score what mattered to *us*, based on *our* aspirations about service value?

## COLLECTING ROBUST DATA

Because we are part of the Wellcome Trust, an organisation known for its scientific rigour, we needed a robust and valid qualitative evaluation that would both withstand internal scrutiny and act as a tool for monitoring and managing performance improvement over time.

## NEW AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

We were also conscious that we were becoming exposed to wider audiences and increased scrutiny. In April 2007, the Library opened in a refurbished building as part of Wellcome Collection – a new London venue for medicine, history, science and art. The building combines exhibition galleries, bookshop, café, conference centre, events forum, members club, an academic research centre and the Wellcome Library, which includes a conservation studio. We knew that this exposure meant that we needed to match the best of what was on offer on 'the cultural high street'. So it was important to capture users' views from the first day of opening in the new environment, so that we could monitor trends over time.

## METHODOLOGY

We engaged a small consultancy team to review our previous surveys and advise on the methodology. They assessed the proposed user satisfaction survey questionnaire we had prepared and suggested that it would not tell us much that was new. Instead, they proposed a novel approach that was immediately easy to understand and very appealing to us. Called the Profile Accumulation Technique (PAT), it elicits free responses from the users of any service or customer experience.<sup>1</sup> The data collected are easy to read and understand and can also be quantified to give a measure of the importance of particular features of the service and its components.

Essentially, the technique accumulates responses from users until there is no new information being recorded – a point called saturation. Users can respond about anything that they think is good or bad, and say why; anything they want to raise is recorded, so that there are no limits on the number of aspects or topics. The consultants also suggested that focus groups could add context to the survey responses.

By the time all the responses have been analysed, the Library has a ranked list of those aspects which matter to users – and a positive to negative (+/-) ratio for each one.



## THE SURVEY

We sent out the PAT forms to users who had agreed to be contacted, and we allowed two weeks for responses. We achieved an 11% response rate, which was good for a postal survey and demonstrated a high level of engagement from the users. During that time, we also ran three focus groups with three representative user constituencies. In all, there were a total of 2,005 comments of which 1,568 were positive and 437 were negative, giving an overall +/- ratio of 3.58, a more than satisfactory result (see 'Results' below for details). In many cases, the negative comments actually suggested confusion or lack of awareness about our services, and that in itself was useful data.

## RESULTS

The users' comments fell into 22 groups, or 'aspects', and for each aspect the +/- ratio was calculated. The technique suggests that where +/- ratios are below 1.9 the organisation needs to take strategic remedial action. In our case there were 10 aspects at 1.9 or below (and therefore in need of attention), 3 aspects between 2.0 and 2.9 (satisfactory) and 7 aspects above 3 (excellent). We were very encouraged by users' affirmation of key aspects of excellence (quality of space, scope and 'browsability' of the collections and helpfulness of staff) and are taking remedial action on the ones where we scored below the 1.9 +/- ratio.

### Monitoring performance over time

These data will now be used to formulate a validated, user-focused questionnaire. This will permit the Library to monitor how well the important services are delivered, and how satisfied the users are. By repeating that survey over subsequent years, the Library will also have a robust longitudinal assessment of performance improvement.

We do not believe we would have reached this level of clarity about our users without this methodology. We gathered new data such as age profile and how users categorised themselves, in addition to basic and subtle messages about our Library.

This evaluation tool has been used successfully within education, professional services and elsewhere, and we have been impressed by the speed of implementation and the easy fit of the methodology to the requirements of libraries.

The authors would be very happy to answer any questions about the process and outcomes as we roll it out over time.

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# 'It's just like studying in your front room': designing a twenty-first-century library in a classic building



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## BACKGROUND

Headingley Library at Leeds Metropolitan University is situated on three floors of a listed, turn-of-the-century building on Headingley Campus. It caters for approximately 8,000 students and offers library, IT, AV and faculty facilities. In less than a year it has been transformed from a traditional library to an innovative, flexible, student-centred library for the twenty-first century without closing its doors during the project.

In line with the strategy of the university, our vision was of a contemporary library in a classic setting – a library in a listed building but designed for the students of the twenty-first century, a library that would meet the needs of current students but in a space that could accommodate change. We wanted an innovative library where, above all, the students come first.

The redesign came as a result of moving out of part of our previous space so that it could be used

for university events – we lost some space, but instead of moving our existing services and facilities into the remaining spaces as they were, we took the opportunity to rethink the principles of how our library should be perceived. We thought imaginatively, made use of our observations about how students work and anticipated future demand by providing services they need now and into the future.

## DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

Our inspiration was taken from the way students work and learn. Our solution was to provide spaces to give them choices in when, where and how they could do that. Many of our students work while talking to their colleagues, using numerous technological devices simultaneously – and eating. Our approach was to provide spaces where they were encouraged to do this, and to provide spaces for the way they actually work, not the way we think they ought to work.

## WELCOMING AND STUDENT-CENTRED

Many of our students have a considerable amount of group work to undertake, so our first decision was to create as much group study space as possible. Previously, like many other libraries, we provided group study rooms. Observation and feedback told us that whilst students wanted to study in groups they did not necessarily want to study in a private room. As a result we decided to turn the whole of the ground floor over to an open-plan group study area. The concept was not of 'screening students who want to work from the noise' but rather encouraging a feeling in the students that they can, within reason, make noise themselves. Sets of large tables and brightly coloured tub chairs are available and students study in pairs or groups, talking, surrounded by laptops, mobile phones and portable devices. First impressions of a lively, vibrant buzz are striking as one enters the library. It challenges traditional assumptions of what a library should be and, as one student said, 'It's just like studying in your front room.' Another student said, 'I like the big space when you come in. It's a lot more welcoming.'

Previously students were confronted with three different help desks, depending on what services they wanted to use. The new library incorporates a single point of help that is located on the group study floor so that it is close to the students. With fewer staff needed to support the desk, staff now have the opportunity to offer help in differ-

ent ways which include 'roving' throughout the library and helping students at point of need.

#### **A LIBRARY OF CHOICES**

Every student is an individual, and has different needs from their colleagues. They also have differing needs depending on the time of the academic year or of the day or, indeed, within their academic career. Our next decision was to try and provide enough choices to meet their varied preferences and needs.

Not all our students wish to work in a noisy space all the time, so we provided a large room on the first floor with individual study carrels for those who want to study in a more traditional, reflective, silent environment. The room is simply furnished, has a wonderful view over the surrounding area and is self-policing – students who do wish to talk have plenty of other spaces to move to. Bookings for group study rooms used to be continuously oversubscribed, but the open-plan ground-floor area has met the demand instead. A few bookable student meeting rooms are still available for groups who wish to work away from other students, for example to practice presentations.

The library was designed as a 24-hour study environment. Our observation also showed that students like to eat and drink while they are working. Many of us drink coffee at our desks and we recognised that this is the way students would like to work too. Because of the layout of the building, we were now in possession of a room outside the library's security envelope that we were unable to house resources in. We took advantage of this to create more group study space where eating and drinking are permitted, which has also proved popular. Extra bins and a more rigorous cleaning regime have kept the room a pleasant environment to work in.

#### **FLEXIBLE**

As the amount of space available to us was being reduced, we had to make what space we did have work harder for us. This was done by ensuring that study spaces could be used for a number of purposes. The whole library is connected to the wireless network and we took a policy decision not to purchase any more fixed pcs. Instead wireless laptops were purchased for loan. This has proved extremely popular with students, and instead of each carrel being designated as either for IT or study, without being able to do both, any

space is now multi-purpose and students can read, write or use IT in any one place.

Another strategic approach that we took was to disassociate the collections from specific spaces or areas. We had collections of books, AV materials, language materials, school practice materials and printed journals, all in designated areas, and we wanted students to feel they could use them anywhere in the library. Again, this enabled any one study space to have a number of purposes. The main book stock was moved to one floor, where previously it had been split, and this made it easier for students to find what they wanted. Similarly, the other collections were housed in smaller rooms, freeing up the study space they had been associated with. Students are now encouraged to take materials to the kind of study space that suits them. This has given us the efficiencies of space that were needed when our space envelope was reduced and has enabled us to keep our study seating numbers at the same level as before. Pleasingly, it also gives the illusion of more space and, as one student said, 'It feels a lot bigger than when it was the old book room.'

The book collection at Headingley Library is dynamic and highly relevant to the courses that are taught. A stock-editing exercise takes place each year and the printed collection has decreased slightly, from 156,000 to 148,000 books, in the last five years. In contrast, the library has invested heavily in e-resources and electronic versions of journals are purchased wherever possible. It is not being suggested that printed material has no place in the library of the future, but our library building needed to reflect trends in format of the material being used. Previously the printed journals were accommodated in a spacious room. A decision was made to move the collection to a compact rolling stack. Whilst some perceive that it has somehow been downgraded, this has meant that the large space it previously occupied is now available for mixed uses – students can still take printed journals there to study if they wish to, and they may be working alongside a student looking at e-journals on their laptop. The compact rolling stack is open-access and the entire collection is still available.

#### **FUTURE-PROOFED AND TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED**

On a larger scale, each floor or large room was designed with the future and change in mind. Our approach was to have as little fixed furniture as possible and to harness the latest technology. Floor boxes and the wireless network allow wire-

less laptops to be plugged in anywhere and smartboards have been installed. Our furniture was relatively traditional and low-cost, and is heavily used. Carpet colours change on each floor to indicate a different type of space. Today's library has relatively conventional furniture but with the flexibility designed into each space; tomorrow's library could potentially have a completely different look and feel without the need to reconfigure the building. Indeed, we are now looking at transforming one of our more traditional teaching rooms into a high-tech, inspirational learning room for students to work in outside their classrooms.

The new building design also gave us the opportunity to change our approach to some of the services that we offer. Self-service radio-frequency ID technology was introduced last summer and as a result we decided to design in a book returns room, where students post all their books after returning them themselves. Staff can sort books onto trolleys behind the scenes as they are returned. In the future, self-service issue could be located on the book floor if needed and we are now looking at self-service collection of holds and at different ways of managing our short-loan collection.

#### **AT THE CENTRE OF UNIVERSITY LIFE**

The library is now at the centre of university life on campus and works in partnership with a number of faculties to provide learning facilities outside their classrooms. For example, language students have access to self-service language resources 24 hours a day and the university's IT labs are part of our fully converged front-line services. This results in students on all courses passing through the building, some on their way to specific classes, some to stay and learn independently. The library at Leeds Met is also unique in the country in being part of one of the faculties of the university and we work closely with our colleagues in the faculty to enable them to open their specialist labs 24 hours a day. Most importantly, the university is proud of its library and we are now the centre of events, launches and open days where our innovative, highly student-centred approach is shown off as an asset.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The student-centred approach to library design has been an overwhelming success. Feedback from the Students Union, surveys and many individual students has been very positive. We

now have a library that has a 'lively, vibrant buzz', 'that is not how you'd expect a library to be' and that has enough choice for everyone. To keep the library open during this major building project was undoubtedly a challenge, and without the hard work, involvement and ideas of the staff it would never have happened.

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# Charter Mark – to apply or not to apply?

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## INTRODUCTION

On 30 January 2008 Aston University Library staff gathered to celebrate our achievement of Charter Mark status. Jill Lambert, formerly head of public services and recently retired, returned to the library to join in the celebration. So what does Charter Mark status mean for the library? Firstly, it is the achievement of a government national standard in high-quality customer service, which is an important external validation of the effectiveness of the library in delivering quality customer service. Secondly, it represents a commitment to evaluate and improve the quality of customer service on an on-going basis for the benefit of all users of the library.

## WHY DID WE APPLY?

Like many other institutions, in July 2005 Aston library & information services successfully achieved Investors in People status. We had achieved recognition of the investment that we make in library staff, but we also wanted to validate what we have been doing to improve our services for customers. A belief in our customer services excellence and the high regard in which the library staff are held by university staff and students alike gave us the confidence to aim

for formal recognition. Now that students are fee-paying, they arrive at university with a much higher expectation about the quality of service they should receive and are far more articulate in expressing their demands than previously. In addition, quality of service needs to be continuously assessed against the context of increasing student numbers. It is therefore useful to be able to provide evidence that we achieve certain standards of customer service and value for money, through the Charter Mark certification.

We felt that valuable lessons could be learned from industries that provide targeted and specific services at point of need, adapting and changing according to customer feedback and requirements. But we did not feel that these were directly applicable in an academic library environment. The Charter Mark framework was developed with public services in mind and seemed to echo very much the way in which library & information services saw itself in relation to its customer base. We were concerned that because Charter Mark is focused on public-sector organisations there would be little in it for an academic library. However, Swansea and Bolton Universities shared with us their experiences of achieving Charter Mark status and confirmed our view that it was the right approach for Aston. In addition, we felt that the decision to apply and the application process itself could provide the impetus, over a period of time, to improve standards by analyses of gaps or shortfalls in meeting the criteria and establishing actions to meet them.

## HOW WE STARTED

Library & information services had been looking at the Charter Mark standard on and off for a few years, but had not found the necessary impetus to do anything about it. It is certainly not something to be taken lightly and, although hardly life-changing, it does indeed change for good the way in which you view your services and your customers. It leads to a questioning of all our assumptions about what students and staff want from a library service and how we can incorporate their views into the strategic planning process.

The final decision to apply came largely as a result of Jill Lambert announcing her plan to retire in September 2007. Charter Mark had long been one of her aspirations and now it was agreed that it would be her swan song, so to speak.

The timing was not great. During the summer of 2007, just as we needed to get the application together, the library was also committed to imple-

menting a new library management system (LMS) – not a brilliant combination. Almost all the staff were involved one way or another with developing the specification for the new LMS, undertaking site visits to other universities with the same system or preparing existing data ready for migration – so who did that leave for Charter Mark? Even with limited staff resources, we managed to consult and involve staff at all levels in the library (an important process in itself in relation to fulfilling Charter Mark). The task of writing the Charter Mark application fell to our small Charter Mark task force.

**THINKING OF APPLYING?**

The Charter Mark government national standard for customer service for organisations delivering public services is independently and rigorously evaluated and assessed against six broad criteria, as listed below, but the fundamental question at the heart of the criteria is: ‘What does the customer expect or hope for from the services you offer?’ In applying for Charter Mark, we had to ensure that we are consulting and listening to our customers’ views as well as acting and delivering on what they would like.

The six Charter Mark criteria are as follows:

- Set standards and perform well.
- Actively engage with your customers, partners and staff.
- Be fair and accessible to everyone and promote choice.
- Continuously develop and improve.
- Use your resources effectively and imaginatively.
- Contribute to improving opportunities and quality of life in the communities you serve.

Some of the benefits of attaining the Charter Mark standard are listed below, but, from the experience of existing Charter Mark holders in the academic library sector, the benefits can be more wide-ranging or unexpected. It:

- underpins everything we do and makes us question existing assumptions
- improves customer service and customer awareness
- improves staff motivation/communication
- ensures staff involvement in the whole planning process
- can lead to greater liaison within the university and beyond
- demonstrates that we care about our users

- gives recognition to the library for services
- provides an opportunity for good public relations
- confers the kudos of joining a small number of university libraries who have achieved Charter Mark
- can provide an external benchmark for customer services
- provides a framework for front-line staff to be involved in suggesting operational changes, since they hold the key to this award.

Inevitably there are aspects that may be negative. These include:

- the additional workload involved in applying for an award
  - the effort involved in monitoring a service balanced against actually delivering and developing the service
  - a possible negative effect on staff morale if workloads are increased
  - staff perceptions that it is they who are being monitored or assessed rather than the service
  - difficulty of interpreting the assessment criteria for our particular situation
- the cost of the application
- the need to reapply every three years if an award is made
  - the idea that we already have a good service so the whole process is simply paper-chasing.

**THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

Detailed information about the Charter Mark application process is available on the Cabinet Office web site, including an on-line self-assessment tool. For Aston LIS, a pre-assessment consultation with the accredited assessor provided invaluable guidance on the application process and helped us to identify aspects of the service for which we needed to gather more evidence against the criteria. It was well worth the investment and this took away most of the anxiety and concern that the undertaking might be too great. The application process involved submitting a detailed written account explaining how the library met the criteria for the standards, with matching evidence provided. The application was submitted prior to the two-day assessment visit. The assessment visit entailed various interviews with key stakeholders, library staff and customers, an analysis/examination of the evidence and observations of the service points in the library.

## **SO HOW DID ASTON'S LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES DO?**

We passed! Our level of compliance with the standard was just over 80%. These are the key areas on which we will be concentrating our efforts over the next 12 months, as highlighted by the assessment exercise:

### *Consultation*

Although there is consultation between library & information services staff and academic staff in setting and reviewing standards, there is room to improve the same consultations with students and to offer clear linkages between the standards set and customer comments.

Whilst information is provided in plain language, it is not clear whether the way it is being provided meets the needs and preferences of our customers.

### *Monitoring of performance*

Service performance, though it is monitored in all areas, is not always set against key standards. A more comprehensive overall monitor would give customers a better view of performance.

Whilst there is evidence that the library provides a value-for-money service, there should be more evidence of independent assessment.

## **WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?**

There was a considerable amount of work involved in writing the application, gathering all the evidence and then in the assessment itself. This all took place in October 2007. The relief and satisfaction of being awarded Charter Mark was short-lived as we were thrown straight into a new academic year and all the hustle and bustle associated with it. When we finally drew a breath it was Christmas and already we were facing demands from students for longer opening hours and more computers. Engaging directly with our customers and their requirements and acting upon their needs (a key principle of Charter Mark) allows scope to make changes that are specific to our customers, not generic changes. For Aston this has meant a commitment to extend opening hours, and from April 2008 we will be open for 24 hours six days a week.

However, further work is still required in ensuring that the Charter Mark accreditation has a positive impact on the library service and the

university also, and so it goes on. The Charter Mark certification is valid for three years, subject to annual assessment. Our assessor will conduct a review visit in October 2008 and we hope to be prepared.

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# A week in the life of the director of the Library and Information Statistics Unit (LISU)



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## Monday

The week starts as it so often does — with a screen full of unread e-mail. While much is dealt with — or deleted — pretty quickly, some is more interesting, and I spend time digging around the LISU archives to write a reference for a former member of staff, extracting figures from the SCONUL database on electronic subscriptions to answer an enquiry and fleshing out a survey timetable for an ongoing project on open access to research outputs. I also receive an invitation to a digitisation workshop in Luxembourg but, after quickly discovering that I cannot fly direct from East Midlands, pass the challenge of making travel arrangements to Sharon, one of LISU's administrators, who is much better at such things!

In the afternoon, a complete change of tack, and a tele-conference with a colleague in Loughborough's department of information science and representatives of the charity BookTrust to discuss possible options for research into primary school libraries. School libraries in general are a quite neglected area, with particular issues for primary schools — few have specialist library staff, let alone qualified librarians, and many do not even have a separate library space. We agree the outline for a piece of largely qualitative research, designed to identify factors that make for a quality school library. Now we just have to write the formal proposal to get it funded.

## Tuesday

The day starts with a meeting in the University Library to discuss proposals for their next

user survey, on the support provided to the University's research centres. The library staff are more than capable of undertaking their own surveys, but seek advice on how to target the questions and whether a sample survey would give them reliable information. I also 'volunteer' LISU staff to pilot their questionnaire — a fair reversal of the usual role, where we are asking library staff to pilot our questionnaires.

Later we hold our monthly LISU team meeting — a chance for everyone to be brought up to date on the various projects going on at any one time, and to discuss other issues of interest. This month, much of the discussion is taken up with designs for the cover of the new edition of *Who else writes like ...?* A reader's guide to fiction authors. On balance, we are not impressed with the design team's first suggestions, and decide to go back to them with a tighter brief. The book will not be published for another six months, but the cover is needed well in advance, for inclusion in the various publishing directories, which appear in the summer and are an important source of publicity. We also discuss the format of LISU's web pages (<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dis/lisu/index.html>), and publicity for LISU's 21st birthday this year.

## Wednesday

Today starts with a university staff development session on project management and team leadership. For three hours, I am one of a group of eleven senior researchers led through the maze of issues around how to get the best out of your team, how to handle the various stakeholders in a project — not just the funders, but a whole range of individuals and organisations which many of us had not thought of. I leave with my head buzzing and some good ideas.

I get back to find the office in uproar, with strange computing problems — documents which print from one pc but not another, and no, not Microsoft — and deadlines in danger of being missed on a number of fronts as a result. A temporary solution is found, and the deadlines met, with a promise of further investigation by our IT support team. As the panic dies down, I turn my attention to the SCONUL return enquiries in my inbox, and finish the day by logging the 100th response on the 2006–07 statistics. Only around another 40 to go ... The SCONUL statistics have their greatest value in the high response rate and, while many of the smaller members may find collecting the data rather a burden, the value that can be gained



in terms of advocacy for the sector as a whole, and for individual libraries, is immense.

#### **Thursday**

To London, for the SCONUL Working Group on Performance Improvement (WGPI) meeting. For once, the train is on time, and not crowded. Train journeys are a good opportunity to catch up on the reading I don't have time to do in the office, and this is no exception, including the latest Update, and selected extracts from SCONUL Focus, as well as a variety of reports and drafts requiring detailed comments.

Discussion at the meeting is wide-ranging, and some good ideas emerge for the development of the SCONUL statistics (referred to the statistics sub-group for more detailed consideration), the encouragement of members in small institutions to contribute to the annual statistics and the Performance Portal. The group also considers its action plan for the year, and how to take forward some of the more aspirational tasks.

Back on the train and more reading — this time, the draft of a new international standard for performance indicators relevant to national libraries. Compiling new standards is a lengthy process – international expert committees prepare drafts, which are circulated to national standards organisations for comment. For the UK this is the British Standards Institute, who refer the draft to their own committee of experts, then collate the comments for the International Standards Organisation. This process can have several iterations before an international standard is finally agreed and adopted.

#### **Friday**

I spend the morning with two colleagues going through the comments received from a project steering group on a draft final report. As is so often the case, different members of the group have come up with contradictory notes, which makes revision a difficult task. Many of the amendments suggested are simply to expand and clarify specific points, but others are concerned with the description of the findings, and we suspect that individual political agendas are being aired. LISU has a reputation for independence which we are keen to preserve, so a carefully worded e-mail will be needed.

Friday afternoon is often spent tidying up and finishing off, and this week is no exception. I do my filing (electronic as well as paper), answer more enquiries, write the executive summary to

finish off another project report, send off a set of e-mails in the final round of chasing the last SCONUL returns and submit two bids for new pieces of work. What will next week bring, I wonder ...?

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# News from SCONUL

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## BRIEF NEWS

Recent statistics show steady growth in the use of SCONUL Access – the single reciprocal access scheme for researchers and part-time and distance-learning students. Over 12,000 researchers and 11,000 sub-doctoral students used SCONUL Access last year. SCONUL is delighted that the Research Information Network has decided to continue its financial support for the scheme, including a special non-recurrent grant to help the smallest institutions formerly members of the forerunner scheme UK Libraries Plus.

A SCONUL idea for a 'Copyright Ombudsman' was discussed at a hearing of the UK Parliament's Skills Select Committee. SCONUL's Secretary attended the Committee session alongside the Chair of the Libraries and Archives Copyright Alliance as part of an inquiry into the work of the Copyright Tribunal.

The number of European universities and research institutions using repositories to disseminate their research outputs grew to 230 by the end of 2006 according to a new study from the EC-funded DRIVER project. The 'European Repository Landscape' study produced an inventory of digital repositories in the 27 countries of the European Union and offers thoughts on next steps forward.

The influential journal Science has reversed course and rejoined JSTOR - the electronic collection of journal backfiles, to which many SCONUL libraries subscribe. The move follows a petition signed by SCONUL in October 2007 protesting against the withdrawal of Science.

JISC have launched P3M - a set of 'infoKits' to help with the three 'Ps' of Project, Programme and Portfolio Management.

The Research Information Network has published reports on two major consultations. The first on data sharing responded to a request from the Prime Minister to examine access to and sharing of personal information. The second looked at the Research Excellence Framework (the successor to

the RAE) and found an overwhelming response from librarians that bibliometrics alone are felt to be an unreliable measure of quality.

Harvard University has become the first US higher education institution to introduce a mandatory open-access repository for its scholars' work. Every article by any faculty member will be deposited in the university library unless he or she requests to opt out. Also in the US, a study found that less than a third of the papers generated with Wellcome Trust funding are making it into the public domain - in direct contravention of the Trust's open-access policies.

Four priorities for HEFCE were laid out by Minister John Denham in a letter outlining HEFCE's recent grant settlement. The priorities include increasing student numbers, building the relationship between employers and higher education and improving accessibility of higher education to all parts of society.

Two major documents are set to shape how libraries work with the NHS.

The first - the National Review of NHS Health Library Systems in England provides in-depth commentary on the current context of health libraries and the Cilip/SCONUL Health Strategy Group is working closely with author Professor Hill on the issues raised.

The second document, the National Service Framework, is a quality assurance framework to replace the current Helicon accreditation. The intention is that library/knowledge services are aligned to the business needs of the NHS and are seen to deliver on need and expectation.

The SCONUL Working Group on Performance Improvement has established a new private mailing list for members who prepare the SCONUL annual statistical return. To join 'LIS-SCONUL-STATS', contact [jean.yeoh@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:jean.yeoh@kcl.ac.uk).

A new group to represent health and medical librarians has been formed. The University Health & Medical Librarians Group (UHMLG) aims to bring together information professionals from higher education, the National Health Service and other sectors.

In the Westminster Parliament, the Select Committee on Innovation, Universities and Skills added 'science' to their name and list of responsibilities. In an unrelated development, JISC Collections have made available House of Commons Parlia-

mentary Papers from 1901-2004 (all 9.5 million pages of them), free of charge to all staff and students at UK universities.

'Libraries Unleashed', a major supplement exploring the future of the academic library was published in the Guardian on 22 April 2008. The wide-ranging supplement included a feature on library design explaining how university libraries are building areas for both tranquil study and louder group working.

SCONUL guidelines for librarians helping international students were reported in Times Higher Education magazine on 29 May 2008

The Research Information Network (RIN) has commissioned research on the, 'Activities, costs and funding flows in scholarly communications'. RIN's latest report backed by SCONUL, RLUK and the Publishing Research Consortium is an important piece of research, providing for the first time an overall picture of the costs of the scholarly communications system as a whole. It calculated that the global cost each year of undertaking and communicating the results of research reported in journals is £175bn.

Following up April's Library Management Systems report, SCONUL is working with JISC and Sero Consulting on the TILE (Towards Implementation of Library 2.0 and the E-Framework) study. The study will investigate the effects of Library 2.0 both on services and the e-framework.

The SCONUL Working Groups on Performance Improvement and Quality Assurance have teamed up to assess the value and impact of the National Student Survey on libraries. SCONUL members should get in touch with Tracey Stanley at University of York for details.

A consultancy engaged by HEFCE invited SCONUL to contribute to their submission towards the next Comprehensive Spending Review, and in particular to identify the 'real' cost of providing an appropriate quality UK higher education student experience. SCONUL hopes to make available to members the evidence it submitted to this inquiry.

Portsmouth's new multi-million pound 'green' university library has been shortlisted for a design award from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

The UK LOCKSS (Lots Of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) pilot concluded having achieved its overall ambition to set up a UK alliance of 30 higher education libraries. However a report found its aim of building a substantial collection of e-journals had not been wholly achieved because a number of larger publishers had not joined.

The M25 Consortium of academic libraries, led by LSE, received funding from HEFCE's Shared Services programme for its 'WAM25 project', a study to look into the feasibility of a pilot project to provide walk-in access to e-resources within the Consortium's libraries.

JISC TechDis, in collaboration with the RNIB, has published two new resources to help university librarians and their institutions improve provision for disabled students. The 'Publisher Lookup UK' and 'Guide to Obtaining Textbooks in Alternative Formats' are both designed to increase use of alternative formats such as e-books and PDFs for the reading-impaired. The resources are part of JISC's ongoing 'Libraries of the Future' campaign.

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# Report from the SCONUL Executive Board

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A key aspect of the work of SCONUL's Executive Board recently has been to continue to extend links with various "sister" organisations. Some, such as our links with CURL (the Consortium of University Research Libraries) - now RLUK (Research Libraries UK) - and RIN (Research Information Network) are already well established whilst others, such as those with JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee), have traditionally been less developed. That situation is now changing. Senior JISC colleagues have joined us at a number of Executive Board meetings as well as at last summer's annual planning event in Loughborough which brought together Board members, the chairs (or their nominees) of the various SCONUL groups as well as colleagues from CURL and UCISA (Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association). This has led to closer working with JISC and the development of joint activities, early examples of which are identified below:-

## **LMS AND RELATED SYSTEMS STUDY**

Last year JISC and SCONUL jointly commissioned a study into the library management system (LMS) and related systems market. The study, undertaken by SERO Consulting Ltd with Glenaffric Ltd and Ken Chad Consulting Ltd, is now available at [http://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/lms\\_report/lmsstudy/](http://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/lms_report/lmsstudy/).

The report was informed by:-

- an analysis of the current LMS and related systems market
- detailed interviews with systems vendors
- an horizon scan that considered broader systems developments (e.g. Google/Amazon, corporate systems etc.) and other relevant technological and related developments (e.g.

Web 2.0 initiatives and user behaviours in the networked environment etc.)

- a library survey

The report also includes, in section 7, a practical guide to support local decision-making.

A community consultation event on the study findings is being planned to help JISC and SCONUL identify priorities for further action. The event is primarily aimed at directors and senior managers (rather than those responsible for operational systems delivery) and will also include members of the project team and systems vendors. The date for this London event is 27 June 2008.

The report raises a number of significant challenges and opportunities for both the community and individual libraries. It also includes specific recommendations for JISC and SCONUL to pursue, both individually and collaboratively.

## **TILE (TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION OF LIBRARY 2.0 AND THE E-FRAMEWORK)**

In a related activity, JISC and SCONUL are working together on the TILE project which will identify how far Library 2.0 thinking is beginning to develop within the UK higher education community, what activities are being initiated and early responses to such activities. The project follows on from survey responses received as part of the above LMS and related systems study in which 47 out of 100 respondents indicated they were already involved to some degree in delivering Web 2.0 services, according to their own interpretation of the term, with a further 36 indicating it was their intention to do so in future. The project team is led by David Kay from SERO Consulting and includes several members who were involved with the earlier project.

The project will include coverage of a) strategies, activities and tools b) Library 2.0 and the library mission and c) Library 2.0 and the librarian. A survey to help inform the TILE project will be undertaken in May 2008 and the project report should be available in the early autumn.

## **JISC/SCONUL ACCESS MANAGEMENT EVENT**

SCONUL sponsored a joint event with JISC on general access management issues, including how the HAERVI (HE Access to e-Resources in Visited Institutions) report might be progressed, in March. The current relevance of the topic was reinforced when the event was over-subscribed within a few

hours of registration being opened to members. A further event is being organised for 13 May.

#### **SCONUL'S DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL AGENDA**

SCONUL's Executive Board members are working to extend our links with international sister organisations as well as with those closer to home. Following the successful study tour to South Africa last year CHELSA (Committee for Higher Education Librarians of South Africa) has formally welcomed the initiative to develop a closer working relationship with SCONUL and is currently identifying those areas where they would particularly value developing a joint agenda.

SCONUL is also sponsoring, with CHELSA, Joyce Gozo (the Librarian of Vaal University of Technology) to support her attendance at the SCONUL Conference in Edinburgh in June 2008.

Details are also being finalised for the Canadian study tour that is taking place in late September to mid-October. The tour will not only enable participants to see at first hand a range of initiatives and best practice being undertaken by our Canadian hosts but will also enable SCONUL and CARL to consider how to take forward various collaborative possibilities following discussions during their visit to the UK late last year.

Planning for the 2009 SCONUL study tour to Scandinavia has begun. Whilst details are yet to be confirmed it is possible that the study tour will focus on Denmark and Sweden. Given the UK and Ireland's relative proximity to our proposed host countries the study tour organisers are considering whether it might be feasible for some participants to join the study tour for part of the tour rather than the entire schedule.

#### **UKRR**

The UKRR (UK Research Reserve) project team recently submitted the phase 2 project proposal to HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) for their consideration. Prior to that, SCONUL's Executive Board sent confirmation to the project team that it endorsed the project's objectives (i.e. to develop a nationally co-ordinated retention scheme for print resources to reduce the current costly duplication and storage of resources) and that it strongly endorsed the project team's proposal to seek funding to enhance SUNCAT and related tools to support this. SCONUL has also indicated that, on behalf of the community, it would be happy to adminis-

ter the arrangements under the project to ensure sufficient copies are retained nationally. This had originally been intended to begin under phase 1 of the project. However, it has not yet been possible to put those arrangements into effect.

#### **TOP CONCERNS**

The 2008 SCONUL Top Concerns survey was run in April 2008 and is again being managed in conjunction with Priority Search. 115 responses were received (this was 20 higher than last year). The exercise seeks to establish what issues library directors have been focusing on recently and what they expect to be focusing on during the next twelve months. Whilst the detailed results are still to be made available early indications suggest that space planning, e-environment and funding issues will be amongst the issues expected to dominate the coming year. Full results will be publicised on the SCONUL website once available.

#### **SCONUL CONFERENCES – DATES FOR THE DIARY**

Registration for the forthcoming residential conference in Edinburgh (11 to 13 June 2008) opened in May. For further details see <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/events/agm2008/>. The theme of the conference is "Think globally, act locally".

The date for the 2008 one-day SCONUL is Tuesday 16 December. The venue will be the British Library Conference Centre.

#### **FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAMME**

The third annual run of the popular Future Leaders Programme - the bespoke leadership development course for experienced SCONUL professional managers working in Information roles – started recently.

It is delivered by the Leadership Foundation with the support of SCONUL and also the British Library, UCISA and JISC. The current cohort of 18 participants was competitively selected on the strength of their applications, commitment and talent for leadership, strength of their proposed change management projects and support from their head of service to successfully complete the programme. For the next year, the participants will develop their self-awareness, influencing and communication skills, and leadership capabilities while reflecting upon strategic and organisational change management options that are available to a leader, over a series of residential modules and Action Learning days. The programme will

conclude in March 2009 and participants will then join the ranks of the 40 alumni who have successfully completed the programme since its launch in the spring of 2006.

An article on the Future Leaders Programme is planned for the next issue of Focus.

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# RLUK/SCONUL digest of scholarly communication news

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*This is taken from the RLUK/SCONUL Digest of Scholarly Communication News of February and April 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 Ireland of developments in scholarly publishing.*

## **NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RECEIVES GO-AHEAD FOR MANDATORY OPEN ACCESS**

The long struggle for open access to US taxpayer-funded biomedical research achieved statutory success in December 2007 with the President's signature to the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2008. The text reads: 'The Director of the National Institutes of Health shall require that all investigators funded by the NIH submit or have submitted for them to the National Library of Medicine's PubMed Central an electronic version of their final, peer-reviewed manuscripts upon acceptance for publication, to be made publicly available no later than 12 months after the official date of publication: Provided, That the NIH shall implement the public access policy in a manner consistent with copyright law.' This immediate deposit / later release model will encourage a high level of deposit, as authors are less likely to forget to deposit, and the 'no later than 12 months' wording for open access will in practice encourage release of the text closer to the 'six months

after publication' being adopted in policies from many European agencies. The NIH policy would not have been achieved without the actions of the US library community, working with other public interest groups, in gaining support within Congress for open access to publicly funded research. The Association of Research Libraries has for many years had an 'Executive Director Federal Relations and Information Policy', whose office keeps a close eye on what is happening in the corridors of power in Washington DC, countering the effect of publisher lobbying.

#### **EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL ALSO MANDATES OPEN ACCESS**

Also in December 2007 the European Research Council finalised the wording of its policy on open access. The ERC text begins: 'The ERC requires that all peer-reviewed publications from ERC-funded research projects be deposited on publication into an appropriate research repository where available, such as PubMed Central, ArXiv or an institutional repository, and subsequently made Open Access within 6 months of publication.' This text adopts the same early deposit / later release model as NIH, although with a slightly later time for deposit (on publication rather than on acceptance for publication) and an earlier deadline for release – that is, six months after publication rather than twelve. Research funded by the ERC accounts for about 15% of all research funded by the European Commission, and discussions are ongoing with the Commission regarding open access to research funded through other EU agencies. The Commission's policies have been strongly influenced by large numbers of signatures from researchers and academic institutions to the petition presented to the Commission on 15 February 2007. As in the US, if further progress is to be achieved, action by librarians will be necessary, to speak or write to members of the European or UK parliaments.

#### **GROWING SUPPORT FOR CERN GOLD OA INITIATIVE**

The CERN-led initiative to work with publishers to convert the high energy physics journals from a subscription to a consortium-led gold open access model has now received letters of support from the relevant funding agencies and libraries in Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Greece, Slovakia, Denmark, Norway and Austria. Other countries with high energy physics research are currently considering the initiative. Meetings have been arranged by STFC (Science and Technology Facilities Council), JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and RLUK (Research Libraries UK)

(6 February at the Institute of Physics in London) and by the California Digital Library (29 February) for UK and US physicists and librarians to consider the opportunity this initiative presents. The new consortium will be called SCOAP3 (Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics) and full information can be found on the web-site: <http://www.scoap3.org/>.

#### **GROWING SUCCESS FOR CALIFORNIA DIGITAL LIBRARY**

The University of California has announced that its eScholarship Repository has passed the 5 million mark for full-text downloads of its open access scholarly content. The eScholarship Repository, a service of the California Digital Library founded in 2002, provides a robust full-spectrum, open access publishing platform for pre-prints, post-prints, peer-reviewed articles, edited volumes and peer-reviewed journals. The repository houses a broad range of scholarly content from disciplines across the humanities, social sciences, mathematics and sciences, currently holding over 20,000 papers and other academic works. Part of a suite of publishing services developed by the CDL in recent years, the eScholarship Repository serves the scholarly publishing needs of individual faculty and academic departments, laboratories and research units across the University of California system. It is also a central mechanism in the collaborative publishing efforts between the CDL and the University of California Press.

#### **SCIENCE REJOINS JSTOR**

Pressure from the world-wide library community, largely expressed through the ICOLC (the International Coalition of Library Consortia) has led to AAAS, the owner of the journal *Science*, reversing an earlier decision to end the agreement for the deposit of *Science* volumes in JSTOR. Commercial confidentiality prevents release of the changes to the pricing and licensing conditions JSTOR had to agree in order to satisfy AAAS, but the incident does illustrate the power of the library community to influence publishers' policies when librarians are truly united. An influential figure in the UK publishing industry has said on a number of occasions that the UK library community could have more influence upon journal pricing if the community were united in its negotiations with publishers.

#### **NEW STUDY ON PEER REVIEW**

A study on 'Peer review in scholarly journals' by Mark Ware Consulting has been published by the

Publishing Research Consortium. The full report (80 pages) and a summary report (22 pages) are both available through <http://www.publishingresearch.net/PeerReview.htm>. Like the British Academy report on peer review last year, the report is fairly conservative in its finding that authors support the need for peer review and believe that peer review improves the quality of the published paper. However, the report also identifies authors' concerns about the way the current system operates, particularly that the system is too slow and that peer reviewers are overloaded. Of the various forms of peer review, authors voted double-blind peer review the most effective and open peer review the least effective.

#### **DRIVER SUMMIT**

The DRIVER Project (Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research) has held a summit to discuss the way forward from the achievements of the first EU-funded DRIVER Project into the start of DRIVER II. Around 100 invited representatives from organisations participating in the project, as well as experts from the US, Canada and South Africa, came together to discuss future actions in establishing repository infrastructures which cross national borders. A report on the summit is available at <http://www.driver-support.eu/multi/news.php>. In an international scholarly communication environment, added value can be provided to researchers and learners through access to content held in institutional repositories in a number of European countries. The European Commission has a policy commitment to experiment with cross-border infrastructures to improve access to and preservation of scientific information, and DRIVER is a key project in fulfilling this commitment.

#### **EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION AGREES OPEN ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council of the European University Association has endorsed open access recommendations drafted by the Association's Open Access Working Group. The recommendations are divided into three sections: those for 'university leadership' (primarily recommending the self-archiving of all research publications in an institutional repository), those for National Rectors' Conferences (urging these bodies to work with other agencies to achieve mandated self-archiving) and those for the EUA itself, pledging continued dialogue with other organisations to promote self-archiving. It is to be hoped that individual institutions in membership of the EUA will take action upon this

very strong support for open access to research papers through institutional repositories. One unfortunate feature of the EUA recommendations is that they take no cognizance of the preference in some academic communities for alternative open access strategies, that is, through deposit in subject repositories or through publication in 'gold' open access journals.

#### **CAPE TOWN OPEN EDUCATION DECLARATION**

Manifestos and declarations have been a feature of the movement to effect open access to publicly funded research, and a new declaration has been launched by the Open Society Institute and the Shuttleworth Foundation to promote the sharing of educational resources across the internet. Although the declaration is inspired by the needs of poorer countries, the three strategies listed in the declaration – for participation in the open education movement, for the release of educational resources and for policy changes at national and local levels – are designed to be applicable in all educational situations. The declaration – which already has over 1,000 individual and organisational signatures – can be read at <http://www.capetowndeclaration.org/>.

#### **SURVEY OF LIBRARY DATABASE LICENSING PRACTICES**

A new survey of library database publishing practices has been published by a commercial market research company, Research and Markets. A summary of the report is available at [http://www.researchandmarkets.com/product/b36547/the\\_survey\\_of\\_library\\_database\\_licensing](http://www.researchandmarkets.com/product/b36547/the_survey_of_library_database_licensing). The survey contains data from 90 libraries, half in the US but also some from Canada, Australia and the UK, and it is claimed to provide information on a wide variety of issues, including various contractual terms and consortial purchasing arrangements. Your editor did not feel able to spend 96 euros to obtain a PDF of the report in order to review it, but the topic is one on which very little comparative information is publicly available, due to restrictive confidentiality clauses.

#### **OPEN ACCESS MANDATE AT HARVARD**

On 12 February Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences became the first US university to adopt an open access mandate for its faculty members. The text of the resolution adopted by the faculty is available at [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~secfas/February\\_2008\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~secfas/February_2008_Agenda.pdf) and includes the following statement: 'Each Faculty member grants to the President and Fellows of



Harvard College permission to make available his or her scholarly articles and to exercise the copyright in those articles. In legal terms, the permission granted by each Faculty member is a non-exclusive, irrevocable, paid-up, worldwide license to exercise any and all rights under copyright relating to each of his or her scholarly articles, in any medium, and to authorize others to do the same, provided that the articles are not sold for a profit ... To assist the University in distributing the articles, each Faculty member will provide an electronic copy of the final version of the article at no charge to the appropriate representative of the Provost's Office in an appropriate format (such as PDF) specified by the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office may make the article available to the public in an open-access repository.' Because of the prestige attached to Harvard University, this mandate attracted considerable attention from the world's press and also from heads of other universities. Time will tell whether Harvard's decision is followed by other universities but combined with the new NIH policy the decision is likely to effect a major growth in the deposit of journal articles in US repositories.

### **TWO US CONSORTIA JOIN SCOAP3**

Two major US consortia have pledged support for the open access physics publishing initiative SCOAP3 (see above; [www.scoap3.org](http://www.scoap3.org)). The California Digital Library – representing all the libraries in the University of California – joined SCOAP3 on 25 February 2008 and OhioLink, a consortium of 86 Ohio colleges and universities, joined on 25 March. The RLUK/SCONUL Scholarly Communication Group has supported an invitation to libraries in the UK and Ireland to pledge support for SCOAP3 subject to satisfactory negotiations with the publishers of high energy physics journals on pricing and licensing terms. The UK participation in SCOAP3 will be managed by JISC Collections.

### **MAX PLANCK AND SPRINGER COMBINE SUBSCRIPTION WITH OPEN ACCESS**

The Max Planck Society and Springer have reached an agreement which allows the scientists working at the 78 Max Planck Institutes and research facilities across Germany access to all content on SpringerLink, and which also includes Open Choice, Springer's open access scheme, for all researchers affiliated with a Max Planck Institute publishing in Springer's journals, allowing full and immediate open access for articles that are accepted for publication. The new

agreement is based on combining the subscription model with open access, and is set up as a two-year experiment to investigate whether this is a more sustainable business model for scholarly publication than either subscription or open access alone. During the period of the agreement, Springer and the Max Planck Society will evaluate the effects of open access on both authors and users.

### **WIPO: AN ONGOING SAGA**

In a meeting in mid-March, member states of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) agreed on elements of a programme of work for the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR). The SCCR decided that it would continue to address issues such as the protection of broadcasting organisations and the protection of audiovisual performances, as well as exceptions and limitations. The broadcasting initiative has been controversial and the SCCR agreed that, while progress was made towards a better understanding of the positions of the various stakeholders, further work is needed to achieve agreement on objectives and the specific scope and object of protection before convening a diplomatic conference. The SCCR also considered a proposal from Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua and Uruguay on limitations and exceptions. This was an elaborated version of a proposal originally submitted to the SCCR by Chile in 2005, which called for an analysis of limitations and exceptions as they relate to education, libraries and access to protected works by the visually impaired. The SCCR called for the organisation of an information meeting on existing and forthcoming studies on exceptions and limitations at its next session, with a view to preparing a comprehensive work plan on the issue. To further enhance understanding of the issue, the SCCR requested that a study be undertaken by the secretariat on exceptions and limitations in relation to educational activities and distance education. WIPO has already undertaken three studies on exceptions and limitations and a fourth study on exceptions and limitations for libraries will also be published shortly, but commercial lobbying and political stalemate at WIPO are likely to prevent any relaxation of international copyright legislation.

### **EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSAL FOR COPYRIGHT EXTENSION**

The European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Charlie McCreevy, announced on 14 February that he will be seeking an extension

of the term of copyright protection for performers from 50 to 95 years. If adopted by the EC this would run counter to the UK's position, as expressed through the Gowers Review, that there is no case for an extension of the term. It is not known how far Mr McCreevy consulted with the member states before making his announcement. His speech at the press conference on 14 February related entirely to the music industry but unfortunately experience shows that politicians are unable to distinguish between the needs of the music or film industries and the needs of users of academic content. Contact by librarians with MEPs may be necessary if this proposal proceeds.

#### **STM / PSP / ALPSP STATEMENT ON COPYRIGHT**

##### **AGREEMENTS**

The International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM), the Professional/Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers (PSP) and the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP) have released a 'Statement on Journal Publishing Agreements and Copyright Agreement Addenda', available at <http://www.stm-assoc.org/documents-statements-public-co/>. The statement is a response to increasing awareness by authors of the restrictions upon re-use of their work and the calls for greater use of a licence to publish in place of a copyright transfer agreement. The publishers' viewpoint, as expressed in the press release accompanying the statement, is that 'STM publishers invariably allow the authors of journal articles to use their published papers in their own teaching and for educational purposes generally within their institutions. Most journals have policies that permit authors to provide copies of their papers to research colleagues, and to re-use portions of their papers in further works or books.'

#### **UK LEGISLATION TO COUNTER COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT?**

A meeting was held recently in London at which a civil servant from BERR (the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) outlined the UK's position on measures to counter copyright infringement through ISPs. If voluntary agreement between ISPs and rights-holders proves impossible, the government will begin consultation on the introduction of legislation. It is believed that the UK government favours the French proposal for 'three strikes and you are cut off': that is, a warning letter would be sent, then temporary suspension and finally termination of the ISP account.

#### **SURF FOUNDATION PUBLISHER SURVEY**

As part of its ongoing work on copyright, in particular supporting the use of a licence to publish in place of a copyright transfer agreement, the SURF Foundation has undertaken a survey of publishers to discover the extent to which publishers will accept the 'Copyright Principles and Licence to Publish' drafted by SURF and JISC. The number of publishers surveyed was 47, and the results show that 16 of the 47 will offer their authors the option of using a licence to publish. The same number of publishers (although not a complete overlap of names) have a repository policy in place which is compatible with the SURF/JISC principles. The Knowledge Exchange Group (to which both SURF and JISC belong) is currently considering how to make this information more widely available to authors. The SURF report is available at <http://www.surffoundation.nl/download/LtP-final-report-dec07.pdf>.

#### **JULIET UP-GRADED**

SHERPA has now upgraded JULIET to include information on requirements for the open access archiving of data as part of funding agreements. JULIET was first set up in 2006 to provide clear summaries of the requirements for academics to archive research outputs in open access repositories. As part of its redevelopment, JULIET now also separately summarises open access publication policies. These deal with some funders' requirements for their research to be published in open access journals. JULIET gives summaries of all of these policies so that academic researchers and others can clearly see what is required by each funder. The service allows comparison of policies across funders, and evaluates the policies against open access ideals. The web-site is <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet/>.

#### **REVIEW OF NHS LIBRARY SERVICES**

The National Review of NHS Health Library Services in England has now been officially published by the NHS and is available at <http://www.library.nhs.uk/aboutnlh/review>. The review makes a number of suggestions with regard to future policy development across the NHS/Higher Education boundaries. These relate to the possible joint procurement of electronic content between the two sectors, work on copyright issues where – for example – individuals from one sector are using the partner sector's resources and the introduction of open access repositories to disseminate NHS-funded research.

## AND FINALLY ...

Not an unusual news item to finish this digest, but a comment from your editor on changing publisher attitudes towards open access. Concern about the future still dominates publishers' thinking, and in particular deep worries about the cancellation of journals as a result of growing repository content. There is no indication that these worries will lead publishers to reduce journal prices. Publicly publishers still oppose open access, but privately there is a level of acceptance that repositories are here to stay. In recent months a more positive attitude has developed towards 'gold' open access, which some publishers are embracing as a good way forward for their industry, even if it does reduce their profit margins. It is noticeable that there is little discussion amongst publishers of the two unmentionable 'elephants in the room': the heavy use of Google by learners (which could threaten publishers by reducing the use of formal published content) and the huge growth in research data (which could transform scientific publishing whatever happens, or does not happen, about open access to published text).

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# The SCONUL Working Group on Quality Assurance - what is it doing for you?



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The first point to make about the QA (Quality Assurance) Working Group is that it is a joint group with representation from UCISA (Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association – ie. Heads of IT) and SCHoMS (Standing Conference for Heads of Media Services). It is therefore in a strong lobbying position in relation to any external quality auditing agency such as the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency), acting as spokesperson for three important central services in universities and colleges.

Indeed the group perceives advocacy as its principal role, with the QAA in particular because of the significance of its auditing role with Higher Education. In the past the group has also sought to make OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) aware of the significance of our services in the education and training of teachers with a joint Best Practice project. The Group's web pages also have links to other specific professional bodies which are involved in accreditation or quality assurance processes in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

## QAA

The group's relationship with the QAA has always been a key factor in the group's activity, taking up most of its agenda. One of the QAA's officers is the group's contact and meets regularly with the Chair. These meetings afford an opportunity for the communication of developments in

the QAA's approach to auditing institutions and the student experience in all parts of the UK, and a chance to persuade the QAA of the centrality of our services to student learning and the support of research activity. Recently it has been important to persuade the agency of the part we all play in the development of e-learning, in enabling effective VLE use and the provision and management of access to online information resources, not to mention our training function.

Related advocacy also takes place by group members, e.g. Group Secretary and Scotland representative, Michael Breaks, recently encouraged SCURL (Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries) to provide a written response to the recent Scottish consultation from the QAA on its latest proposal for changes to the auditing of HEIs in Scotland.

#### **ADVICE**

Another important function of the working group is to provide members of all three organisations with advice as you all prepare for audit, review or any other QA activity by external agencies. Guidelines are provided on the web site to assist with Institutional Audit in England and Northern Ireland, soon to be followed by similar advice for Scotland and Wales. The web pages also include a few examples of members' experience of audit. The site is not hugely populated yet, but we hope to receive more helpful accounts in the near future. With the help of the Working Group on Performance Improvement, some of this information will be included in the Performance Portal.

#### **OTHER ACTIVITY**

From time to time members of the QA group have undertaken surveys of internal QA activity experienced by members, the results of which can also be made available for all. Currently Helen Fletcher is compiling your responses to her brief survey for the web site.

Our group is also considering a joint approach to HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) with the Working Group on Performance Improvement to suggest a more informative set of questions relating to our services for the NSS, National Student Survey. This survey is assuming greater and greater significance and we feel that a more meaningful result could be elicited by changes to the wording of the questionnaire.

#### **DILEMMA FOR OUR SERVICES**

When quality audit comes round, it can feel sometimes that the simple option is to sit tight, keep your head down, and rely on the institutional and student statements as evidence for the performance of your service. This has its risks and it can leave an impression of a passive, reactive service. The view taken by the joint group is that we all need to be given opportunities to tell our own stories, directly to any visiting quality agency, and that there ought to be every encouragement to these agencies to understand the central proactive role played by our services in learning, teaching and research. I hope that your Working Group is helping to achieve this.

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# Conference report

**Information strategies for researchers: where are we making a difference?**  
**SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy / CONUL Advisory Group on Information Literacy event, 31 January 2008, Dublin City University**

Reviewed by:

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A collaborative seminar organised by the SCONUL Working Group on Information Literacy (WGIL) and its Irish equivalent, the CONUL Advisory Group on Information Literacy, on 'Information strategies for researchers – where are we making a difference?' was held on 31 January 2008, at Dublin City University (DCU). Over 80 delegates from across the UK and Ireland gathered together to hear views from practising researchers and librarians working to manage and support the information literacy needs of researchers.

## **PRIORITIES FOR THE RESEARCHER**

The morning session included papers from two established researchers who both drew attention to the researchers' goal of publication and dissemination. Professor Dermot Diamond, Director of the National Centre for Sensor Research at DCU, contextualised this with reference to the importance of the key performance indices (KPIs) of research income, publication and impact to the profile and career of an individual researcher. The decisions made at the beginning of a researcher's publishing history can be significant for his or her

future career – the need for consideration to be given to limiting any name changes; avoidance of multi-authored papers (given their relatively low citation value for individual contributors); and understanding that different disciplines will have different published outputs and accompanying value measures. But there is a general recognition that in statistical terms single-authored output, indexed in citation indexes such as the Web of Science, remains a recognised quality indicator for benchmarking.

This data also contributes to a researcher's overall profile, can provide evidence to attract funding and can be used as needed for career progression.

Professor Diamond identified the significant opportunity that exists for librarians to influence their colleagues and to work with both academic publishers and funding bodies to develop tools to enable the impact of research to be accurately assessed; this ties into the role bibliometrics will play in the next Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the weighting which will be placed on citation counts.

## **RESEARCHERS' PROFILES**

Dr Andrew Booth, who has been an active researcher for over 25 years, prefaced his presentation with the observation that 'Researchers require tailored information, literacy training focussing on information management, not simply information retrieval.' This observation was further examined in the paper in the afternoon delivered by Moira Bent and Jo Webb, whose publication (along with Pat Gannon-Leary) 'Providing effective library services for researchers'<sup>1</sup> advances the proposal that researchers cannot be described as a homogeneous group: that the '7 ages of research' – from masters students through to experts – are accompanied by different needs and priorities which vary as individual research careers progress. This view was expanded on by Sheila Webber, who highlighted differences in information-seeking behaviour, in part linked to her personal experiences of being a research supervisor, research project leader and individual researcher.

Some of the differences identified were:

- personal conceptions of research, which for some might have a focus on outputs whereas for others the personal journey itself may constitute a significant element of the research process

- the different kinds of personal information-seeking behaviour that will be deployed at various stages in the research process: some, for example, involving browsing and others active searching
- the fact that different disciplines require different approaches to information-seeking: for example currency may be less important in English than in chemistry
- different research approaches (most obviously qualitative vs. quantitative).

Her presentation also identified the need for tailored and timely support which, on occasion, will not necessarily reflect the individual 'age' of a researcher. The complexity of a researcher's environment was further explored as part of Bent, Webb and Gannon-Leary's background research for their publication. This included gathering feedback from the research community on their definitions of research – such as 'investigation, interpretation, a holistic activity; theory-led, data-led, grounded in disciplines; multi/inter/trans disciplinary'. This diversity of interpretation, coupled with the wide variety of information needs, has led to the conclusion that a didactic approach to the delivery of information literacy to researchers will be ineffective – that the emphasis should be on developing the skills of early researchers so that they become capable of successful independent learning and self-directed decision-making.

Andrew Booth's presentation served to illustrate this profile in practice, and drew attention to the need for librarians to develop a clearer understanding of what researchers want. Recent research into information-seeking practices highlights dissatisfaction not with the resource-discovery stage of the process but at the final stage, 'the last mile' which delivers the document. Researchers working in this environment are generally comfortable with retrieving and managing a large volume of data and information but are often frustrated by the restrictions placed on access to the full-text of the document. The increase in the availability of pre-prints has led to researchers adapting their behaviour and 'in some disciplines, [search engines] are used as a way of bypassing traditional gatekeepers such as publishers and libraries'.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE LIBRARIAN'S ROLE

In response to this, and taking the opportunity to consider how librarians can assert their role as experts in information management, Andrew

Booth provided some observations and advice for the profession:

- 'Researchers do not follow the neat step-wise progression from a state of unknowing (information need) to one of "knowing" which underpins most information literacy instruction.' In recognising this non-linear approach Booth advocates intervention on a tailored, 'need to know' basis.
- 'Information management, rather than information retrieval, should be the focus of information literacy instruction for researchers.' The focus needs to adjust from the delivery of discrete activities to one which clearly addresses the whole – and often complex – processes of information management.
- 'Where information retrieval is covered it should focus on techniques such as "area scanning", footnote chasing and known author searching rather than keyword searching of abstracts and indexes.' This subtle shift of emphasis is clearly designed to better meet the specific needs of the researcher.
- 'Information literacy training should be "socialised" through formal collaboration with supervisors and integration with existing research programmes or groups.' The importance of context is well recognised as a key element in the successful delivery of information literacy and, for researchers, integrating those activities within their environments is important to both engagement and uptake.

#### STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

The final presenter of the morning, Angela Newton from the University of Leeds, provided a useful insight into the importance of cross-university collaboration to the delivery of a comprehensive information literacy programme for PhD research students. Funded as a result of the Roberts report 'SET for Success',<sup>3</sup> the programme is delivered as a collaborative venture with participation from the University Library, faculty training co-ordinators and the university's staff development unit. As a case-study, it served to illustrate the importance of collaboration with key stakeholders. This further confirms Booth's observation that a key success factor rests in the level of integration information literacy achieves within existing infrastructures, both formal and informal.

Complementing this presentation, Marie Reddan, Librarian at the National University of Ireland,

Galway, provided an overview of how government funding is being used to support the development of a cross-university information literacy skills module for research students. The module is part of a six-module generic skills programme being developed for masters and PhD students at NUI Galway, Trinity College Dublin and University College Cork. The information literacy module is being designed to accommodate both face-to-face and online delivery and will include the following components: information literacy and your research; research resource discovery; evaluating results; managing your information; ethics in using information; and publishing and disseminating your research. Marie highlighted the importance of broad consultation and collaboration in the development of the information literacy module. Campus stakeholders consulted included research students; PhD supervisors; deans of graduate research; teaching and learning units; and the developers of the other modules on the generic programme. This case-study again served as an excellent example of information literacy integration within a campus-wide skills programme for research students.

#### SUMMARY

Evaluation from the day was extremely positive, with many delegates providing useful suggestions for follow-up activities that included further collaborative activities; practical workshops and opportunities for exchange of experiences; and presentations from a range of researchers across disciplines and at varying stages in their careers. In addition to these practical ideas, there was a recognition that opportunities exist for both groups to explore how best to progress this agenda at a strategic level, working alongside other national and international information literacy organisations and groups.

#### REFERENCES

- 1 Available from Facet Publishing at <http://www.facetpublishing.co.uk/>
- 2 E. Fry, 'Researchers migrate to search engines', report in *Library and information update*, 5 (9), September 2006
- 3 See <http://www.ckiv.dk/papers/Newton%20Reaching%20out%20to%20research%20students.pdf>

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# Research methods in information

Alison Jane Pickard. Facet Publishing  
2007, 329pp, ISBN 978-1-85604-545-2

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This book sets itself the ambitious goal of guiding the reader 'step by step through the whole research process'. Its layout is certainly a good start, providing a comprehensive and logical overview of the research process from theoretical underpinning, defining a research question, developing a research proposal, introducing research methods and data collection techniques, and concluding with data analysis and presentation of research results.

Aimed at undergraduate students and 'all practitioners beginning a piece of research' the intention is to provide 'sufficient knowledge' for researchers to 'embark on their own empirical research'. Reassuringly the book doesn't seek to reinvent the wheel, instead drawing on well known and trusted research texts, and providing illustrations within an information context. It adopts a practical approach, breaking aspects of the research process into manageable chunks and providing opportunities to check learning in information related settings at the end of each chapter.

There are some limitations. I would have liked to have seen an 'answers' section to accompany the practical exercises to enable readers to confirm their learning. Additionally, the chapter on presentation of research results is restricted to the writing of a final research report or dissertation. Acknowledgement of writing for peer review publication (increasingly a pre-requisite of funding bodies) would have been helpful together with a list of sources for further reading.

The author emphasises that this book is intended as a brief introduction to research methods for information professionals. She should be taken at her word. This book provides a good founda-

tion for those starting to think about undertaking research, particularly at an undergraduate level. However for a more in-depth understanding of the methods and techniques discussed, the target audience would need to look further afield in order to achieve a successfully executed project. To her credit, this is something acknowledged by the author, and each chapter concludes with a list of suggested further reading.

At its most basic level, this book signposts issues which researchers should be aware of before embarking on a research project. It is a good reference book and provides a thorough starting point for those new to research or those seeking to gain a greater awareness of the range of research techniques available, highlighting their appropriateness in answering specific types of information-related research questions.

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## **Tara Brabazon, The University of Google: education in the (post) information age (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008)**

*Reviewed by:*

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If there were more academics like Tara Brabazon, being a librarian would be a lot easier than it sometimes is.

Perhaps unusually for a lecturer, Brabazon is deeply concerned about how the expansion of the internet has impacted upon her students' expectations and research skills. In particular, she recognises that the ability to select and evaluate information has become a crucial skill, integral to their eventual success. She argues that both teachers and librarians must take steps to guide students through this new landscape.

She devotes a whole chapter of her book to the description of an assignment she sets new students, which requires them to provide a detailed, annotated bibliography for an essay. The students don't actually go on to write the essay but are assessed, instead, on the quality of their preparation and on evidence that they have thought about the different types of information they might use. It's the sort of guided exercise many subject librarians will be familiar with, but it's refreshing to read about a non-librarian doing it, just as it is to hear a university lecturer echoing many of our professional concerns.

Elsewhere, Brabazon repeatedly emphasises the central role of libraries and librarians in the edu-



cation process, quotes us alongside John Gray and Irvine Welsh, and says things like: 'Librarians are important because they punctuate the information landscape, controlling and managing enthusiasm and confusion' (p 35).

Her book isn't just about the importance of information skills. Rather, for Brabazon, the tendency to rely on Google is just one example of the way the sector has embraced technological change as it attempts to expand with limited resources. University managers often overlook the difficulties and challenges that these advances bring, seeing them as a simple solution to the imperative to increase student numbers. So many developments that ostensibly promote 'flexible learning' do nothing of the sort. I-lectures, for example, merely replicate traditional lectures, with little recognition of either the difficulties or the potential of the new medium. Similarly, the practice of putting course materials online can make students lazy and discourage true reading.

In common with the more enthusiastic proponents of information literacy, Brabazon believes that there exist a number of 'literacies' that people must acquire to participate successfully in the modern world. As such, she is against the old-fashioned notion that there is a single literacy as it is perhaps commonly understood (that is, adult literacy). Instead, there are multiple literacies, including cultural literacy, media literacy, web literacy, aural literacy and so on. These literacies are not just about 'encoding and decoding' but, rather, imply 'higher levels of interpretation' (p 212) and 'the deployment of interpretative skills' (p 197). Furthermore, they are not self-standing but relate to each other. Sometimes, for example, it is necessary to possess a particular literacy in order to be able to develop another, and one of Brabazon's main arguments is that true digital literacy is impossible without the prior possession of other literacies.

Personally, I feel these various literacies could have benefited from more rigorous definition. Instead, they appear in somewhat confusing formulations, such as 'new aural literacies are developing, which will destabilize the hierarchical valuation of sight and sound' (p 141). It remains unclear to me how, precisely, a 'literacy' differs from a 'skill'.

Brabazon recently spoke at the annual LILAC conference and was by all accounts an engaging and persuasive speaker, but her writing style is an acquired taste. Dense and at times abstruse, it is

perhaps characteristic of cultural studies discourse. Brabazon also draws heavily on personal experience and the book is filled with anecdotes, extracts from e-mails apparently written by her students and one chapter is apparently structured on the model of her yoga classes.

Another criticism of the book might be that Brabazon writes from a particular political standpoint and her argument is based on the premise that there is a 'hidden curriculum' in the education system that maintains 'the power of the powerful' (p 94). She detects 'pedagogical terrorism' (p 136) in criticism of cultural studies courses.

There is, then, plenty to take issue with in *The University of Google*, but since when has it been our job to agree with everything our academic colleagues say? Despite its eccentricities, this is a significant book for our profession. The question is: how much will it be read by non-librarians?

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## New publications

### Average Prices of British Academic Books

July to December 2007 - Report no. 42  
ISSN 0261 0302 - ISBN  
978-1-905499-29-8

### Average Prices of USA Academic Books

July to December 2007 - Report no. 42  
ISSN 0951 8975 - ISBN  
978-1-905499-30-4

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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 42).

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](mailto:lisu@lboro.ac.uk).

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## News from member libraries

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### University of Birmingham

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Brendan Casey (previously Director of Information Services at City University) has recently taken up the new post of Director of Academic Services at University of Birmingham. Academic Services was created following the merger of the Academic Office and some elements of Information Services (Library Services and Learning Development). The purpose of the new structure is to provide integrated, academically-focussed support services for staff and students and to provide greater clarity and accountability in the leadership and management of all aspects of learning and research support.

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### The British Library

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#### **BRITISH LIBRARY CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECEIVES HONOUR FROM HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES**

Lynne Brindley, Chief Executive of the British Library, was made a Dame of the British Empire in the New Year Honours. Lynne (pictured) received the insignia of her award from HRH The Prince of Wales in an investiture ceremony held at Buckingham Palace on 16 May 2008.

She receives the honour for services to education, having led the Library since July 2000.

Lynne said, 'I am delighted to receive this recognition. It is, of course, a great personal honour but it is also a tribute to my many talented colleagues at the British Library and in the library and information profession.

'It is particularly pleasing that the citation is for services for education: in a world that is ever more focused on information, expanding access to knowledge – in schools, universities, and through lifelong learning – is vital to all our futures.'

Ruth Howlett  
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## University of Buckingham

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The University of Buckingham is now an Associate member of JISC, and in consequence has access to JSTOR and Oxford Journals Archive, thus increasing our e-journal provision.

We have ordered the new SIRSIDynix Enterprise Portal Solution to replace our Library OPAC later this year, and will shortly start work on planning some electronic rooms for our different Schools of Study, so that e-journals, databases and other electronic resources are easily accessible in one place broken down by subjects.

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## Cambridge University

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### **LIVING AT THIS HOUR: JOHN MILTON AT 400**

'Living at this hour: John Milton 1608–2008', on display in the library's exhibition centre until 12 July, marks the quatercentenary of Milton's birth, and juxtaposes his own writings with material from later ages to chart his life and illustrate his continuing influence. Milton studied in Cambridge between 1625 and 1632, and the exhibition opens with documents from the University Archives tracing his academic progress.

### **REFURBISHMENT OF THE MEDICAL LIBRARY**

Users of the Medical Library will see some big changes in the summer of 2008 when the Library embarks on an extensive £1 million refurbishment project. It marks a major step towards achieving a core objective in the Library's strategic plan, namely its migration from a print-based collection to a service built principally around e-resources.

This will be the most substantial refurbishment of the Medical Library since it opened in 1980. The work, funded by the Clinical School and a grant from the Wolfson Foundation, through its CURL Library Programme, will involve structural alterations on both floors. On the upper floor a substantial amount of shelving will be cleared and replaced by an IT-based study area. On the lower floor small seminar rooms and an IT training suite will be created, while the reception area and staff workrooms will be remodelled. The removal of journal back-runs will begin after Easter 2008,

and construction work, starting in mid-June, will finish by October 2008.

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## King's College London

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### **CONNECTED CAMPUS@KING'S COLLEGE LONDON**

#### **Building a leading-edge IT infrastructure and electronic environment**

The provision of IT and information services at key Russell Group institution King's College London are about to enter into a phase of major transformation and innovative development.

Under the leadership of Karen Stanton, Chief Information Officer and College Librarian, the Information Services and Systems (ISS) department has launched the Connected Campus, an extensive programme that will align all of the College's technological and information initiatives with the objectives outlined in King's new 10-year Strategic Plan 2006-2016. The Connected Campus will play a key role in underpinning and contributing to the College's vision of enhancing quality and distinction in all areas of business activity, supported by world-class professional services and infrastructure.

A significant multi-million pound investment has been made by the College to achieve the vision of a state-of-the-art 'virtual campus' that connects people, information, services and knowledge; supporting mobility and enabling reliable 24/7 access and enhanced opportunities for collaboration. The portfolio of key activities includes: refurbishing the core IT infrastructure, providing seamless 'anytime anywhere' access to a diverse range of resources, applications and services and improving research, teaching and administrative processes using the latest web technologies.

'We aim to ensure that King's is in the forefront of technological development,' says Karen. 'The next few years will be a period of intense and challenging activity within

ISS as we set about delivering the Connected Campus framework.' A number of business critical projects already are underway and underpinning all of the work is the notion of delivering a relevant and customer-focused service that meets the complex and ever-changing needs of both staff and students. Key elements of the programme for 2007/8 include:

- introducing single-login to multiple resources and services, including personalised identity management
- delivering robust centrally managed data storage and back-up facilities
- improving desktop, server support and software delivery
- enhancing elearning support
- evaluating and acquiring key Web 2 resources and other social networking tools
- expanding IT and information skills training
- reviewing policies to improve access to information resources

Underpinning the entire programme will be a major e-communications project. A new integrated communications package, due for roll out between May and September 2008, will enable staff and students, regardless of hardware or operating system preferences, to communicate more effectively and efficiently with an integrated suite of Microsoft Exchange and Office resources.

The new tools will enable the effective management of appointments, email, voice mail, tasks and personal contact information. A key element of the new service is that it will embrace emerging mobile technologies and arising preferences for communication and information delivery: instant messaging, SMS, VoIP telephony and the use of Blackberries and other PDAs.

‘Another project team is working on building a standard global desktop for staff and students that will enable access to data and software applications from anywhere on the Internet,’ says Karen. ‘By autumn 2008 all the latest versions of commonly used software applications will be accessible via any computer irrespective of hardware or operating system; regardless of location. New or updated applications will be deployed quickly and efficiently, creating a more cost effective solution for IT support and software distribution across the College.’

Another exciting development is the establishment a Centre for e-Research within ISS to develop virtual research support services. ‘It will lead on building a research data management infrastructure at King’s, seeking to harness the potential of IT to enhance research and manage research output,’ says Karen.

In order to ensure that all staff and students can benefit from the significant changes that the Connected Campus will deliver, a training needs analysis will be initiated so that ISS can develop

an enhanced and integrated IT and information skills training portfolio.

For further information contact Gary Horrocks at [gary.horrocks@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:gary.horrocks@kcl.ac.uk)

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## Leeds Metropolitan University

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### **NEW JISC PROJECT – LEEDS MET PERSoNA**

In early December JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee) notified us that a second bid for funding related to repository development had been successful. Our first JISC project began in March 2007, and concerns the setting up of an Institutional Repository. Wendy Luker is project manager for this project, and Nick Sheppard has been recruited as Repository Development Officer. The Institutional Repository project is now beginning to make real progress and it is planned that the necessary software will be up and running by Easter.

The new project is called PERSoNA, which stands for **P**ersonal **E**ngagement with **R**epositories through **S**ocial **N**etworking **A**pplications. The team will be embedding social networking tools which allow chat, tagging and bookmarking (amongst other things) within the repository, and encouraging users to use these interfaces to comment on their use of our repositories and make recommendations amongst each other leading to the onward discovery of further resources.

### **STAFFING REVIEW**

Libraries and Learning Innovation implemented a new structure at the beginning of 2008. Jo Norry is supported by two Service Managers: Wendy Luker, Service Manager for Academic Support and E-Services, and Dilys Young, Service Manager for Service Development and I-Help. The service is based on four Professional Streams:

- Library Services and Operations (Professional Stream Leader: Katherine Everest)
  - Managing and developing services to students, staff, partners and visitors through the operation of the University’s Libraries and the Faculty of Innovation North’s integrated help and information service, i-Help; lending services; European services; marketing; disability support; learning spaces;
- Library Academic Support (Professional Stream Leader: Fiona Middleton) - Providing support for the academic programmes and research of the Faculties in each subject area

by exploiting the value of the library and information resources in learning, teaching, assessment and research; liaison and partnerships with Faculties; information literacy development; information access and collection development strategies;

- Technologies for Learning (Professional Stream Leader: Arthur Sargeant) - Supporting learning, teaching and research through the exploitation of e-learning systems, communication tools, electronic information services, and learning technologies including X-stream, portal, Library Online, library management system and the institutional repository; the Skills for Learning Team, website and key skills workshops;
- Learning Resources (Professional Stream Leader: **vacancy**) - Acquiring, developing and making available information resources in print, electronic and digital formats, including books, journals, media resources, bibliographic tools and databases to support the University's academic programme and research.

In addition we have said farewell to two long serving members of staff. Betty Downing and Penny Gamble retired after over 50 years' service between them. **Debbie Morris** has moved within Libraries and Learning Innovation to take on the role of Library Systems Developer, replacing Betty Downing. Debbie previously held posts of Journals and E-Resources Manager, Principal Information Officer and Senior Information Officer at Leeds Met. **David Baron** has been appointed to the post of Bibliographic Services Manager, taking over from Penny Gamble. David has previous experience with the British Library at Boston Spa, where amongst a number of roles he was Director of the ISSN UK Centre.

#### **CHARTER MARK SUCCESS**

The Library has been successful in its latest re-assessment of the Charter Mark Award, reaching full compliance with every one of the 63 criteria. This is a rare achievement amongst service organisations, and represents the culmination of a seven year journey since the Charter Mark was first achieved, initially with areas for development. The assessor particularly commended innovation in services, and imaginative use of resources where reprioritisation allows new and different things to be introduced every year. He was also impressed by the speed with which full compliance was reached which often takes organisations much longer. The Charter Mark is the Government's 'gold standard' for customer service excel-

lence, and we are one of the few University library services in the country to hold the award. Staff and students celebrated with a specially commissioned cake (pictured).



#### **BODY FOUND IN LIBRARY!**

As part of the university's spring Festival of Partnerships for Students, Headingley Library hosted a murder mystery event in association with the Harrogate International Festival and led by crime writer Ann Cleeves. Two members of library staff demonstrated hidden acting skills as they played the parts of suspects in the murder of a young library assistant while an audience of students and staff honed their detective skills in guessing 'whodunnit'. The body was ably played by a 'Resucianne' doll supplied by the university's health centre.

Helen Loughran

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## **University of Plymouth**

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#### **CAMPUS RELOCATION**

Summer 2008 will see the last phase of a four-year programme of campus (and library) relocations, when the Faculty of Education moves from Exmouth to Plymouth. Additional library space at Plymouth has been provided by means of a building extension (opened in 2004 to enable the relocation of two other campuses) and a second store. In September 2007 the university took a five-year lease on a warehouse to provide an off-campus library store, in addition to our existing

on-campus store. Lesser-used materials were transferred to these stores from July 2007 – March 2008, in preparation for the relocation of stock. The new store has 1,600 linear metres of shelving and contains book stock. The existing store has 3,500 linear metres and mostly contains journal backruns. All newer and heavily used material remains in the main library where we have also been able to create space for additional study places through the stores project and the move towards e-only journal subscriptions.

#### **ERM IMPLEMENTATION**

After purchasing our Electronic Resources Management system (Verde from Ex Libris) last summer we have been busy implementing and going live with the service. We have been working on improving our management of e-resources of all kinds over the last 12-18 months and so had done a lot of the preparation that implementation needed. That being the case, we have been in full production with the system since November, started using the Workflows in January and are now expanding how we use Verde to manage the “free” e-resources we offer to our users. We have also started to use Verde to manage things like annual support and maintenance contracts for our other library systems.

#### **METALIB SURVEY**

We launched Metalib at the start of the academic year to a lot of positive feedback and some concerns. In January we conducted an online survey to find out what the users thought of the system after the first term of usage. We offered an iPod Nano in a prize draw and over a two week period got 4,000 respondents – a very high rate compared to other library surveys. Overall findings are being presented to the Library Consultative Committee in May and our subject librarians are now working through the results from Faculties and Schools to develop specific action plans for user groups.

Fiona Greig

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## **University of Reading**

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#### **SPECIAL COLLECTIONS SERVICE REGROUPED WITH MUSEUMS SERVICE**

In late 2007 the University of Reading decided to form a new unit called University Library and Collections Services (ULCS) with University Librarian, Julia Munro at its head. This unit

comprises two ‘sub-units’; the University Library (again led by Mrs Munro) and University Museums and Special Collections Services (UMASCS), led by Kate Arnold-Forster.

This restructuring includes the move of the Library’s former Special Collections of archives and rare books into UMASCS management. Those staff formerly based in the Library’s Special Collections have therefore moved into UMASCS. However strong links and working relationships will remain between the Library and UMASCS with various Library staff continuing to support and contribute to, to a greater or lesser degree, many UMASCS operations and functions. Over time it is anticipated that the new working relationships between the University Library and UMASCS will be worked out, tested, and gradually settle down.

Acquisitions Managers: retired and acquired Pat Hanby, our former Acquisitions Manager, retired at the end of March 2008 after over 40 years service and not a single day’s sick leave. In this role she was always an approachable, humorous and helpful colleague, and one with an encyclopaedic knowledge of our Library’s collections, customs and former colleagues! We will miss Pat’s experience, interest in people and wide-ranging enthusiasm for so many things (especially children’s books, cricket and *The Archers*).

Our new Acquisitions Manager is Kate Devaney. As Acquisitions Team Leader – and Pat’s deputy – for the last ten years, Kate has already acquired many specialist skills, and much specialist knowledge essential to her new position.



*Pat Hanby retired from the University of Reading Library recently after over 40 years service. At a retirement party attended by many current and former colleagues, she was presented with a specially printed and bound book in the style of her favourite children’s literature.*

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## Roehampton University

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### ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LAUNCH

Having enjoyed the cyber café launch party in September 2007, we thought we'd have another one in January, when we launched Archives and Special Collections. The launch put the Vice Chancellor's seal of approval on a remarkable transformation of both the collections and the space it is held in.

### SPACE

Two years ago, the Library had but one archive collection and a special collection of historic children's books. Other collections were scattered across the University and beyond. As part of the expansion of the LRC building, the University agreed to the creation of a humidity and temperature controlled store (£95,000), plus the conversion of part of the top floor of the building into a secure reading room. So for the first time ever, we have premises for our collections which meet proper conservation standards.

### COLLECTIONS

The archive now has six major collections:

**Froebel Archive of Childhood Studies**, transferred from Froebel College, which is we think the best collection of Froebel material in the UK and possibly Europe. It is widely used by educationalists interested in Froebel's work. We were honoured to have its founder Joachim Liebschner at the launch and he gave a talk on the collection and materials. As an adjunct we also have the **National Froebel Foundation Archive** containing records of meetings and students qualifications.

**Ann Hutchinson Guest Collection**. This is Laban notation choreography and other materials from Anne's work with many famous ballet and dance stars during her long career and is a wonderful resource for our (Research Assessment Exercise) 5\* rated Dance researchers.

**Jewish Resources Collection**. A teaching collection of books and objects on and about the Jewish faith. This has been built up with the active support and donations from five local Jewish communities. Indeed, we were gifted a torah on the day of the launch, so I had the interesting experience of learning how to roll the scrolls to find the passage appropriate for the day.

**Children's Literature Collection**. This is a collection of works on children's literature as an academic subject including some 3000 monographs and over 30 specialist journals. In addition there are some 900 historical children's books. We add new books each year, usually those winning prizes.

**Richmal Crompton Collection**. *William* needs no introduction, but in addition we have Richmal's personal library, a complete collection of all her less well known novels for adult readers and many personal papers including original drafts of some of the books and annotated scripts from the radio adaptations of the William stories. Papers and documents have already been loaned to the Seven Stories in Newcastle for their current exhibition on mischief in children's books. The cataloguers are working hard on this collection with much already on.

All of the collections are accessible via our Talis system at <http://194.80.240.57/TalisPrism/>.

More information is on our web site at <http://studentzone.roehampton.ac.uk/library/specialcollectionsandarchives/speccolllanding.html> or contact Kornelia Cepok our Archivist ([k.cepok@roehampton.ac.uk](mailto:k.cepok@roehampton.ac.uk)).

### COLOUR IN THE LRC

Our LRC is, being honest, a bit drab with most floors having institutional white walls and grey carpet. Following on from the very popular coloured seating in wired (our cyber café) and its courtyard we have been adding more colour to see what reaction we get. (Incidentally, our entry gate figures have gone up massively thanks to wired, so cyber cafés are good for your SCONUL stats!)



So on the 4th floor you will now find new sofas and pink, blue and green bean bags in the quiet study area. We have also installed lots of extra laptop power sockets.



In the journals area there are comfy red arm chairs as an alternative to the more upright chairs and carrels. We also have new furniture in the silent work area on the 3rd floor. We will be monitoring use and also how well the colours stand up to regular use with a view to what we purchase for the new library.



The stairs have walls and floors with different colours to help people know which floor they are on. Big polished metal floor numbers are coming soon. For readers viewing in black and white, the first floor (pictured) is bright blue!

This colour coding is being reflected in coloured signs and notices on the book floors.

Adam Edwards

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## University of York

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### NEW DIRECTOR

Stephen Town joined us in September 2007 as the new Director of Library and Archives. Elizabeth Heaps has now moved on to the role of Pro-Vice Chancellor for Estates in the University. Much of Elizabeth's work in the immediate future will be directed towards the University's expansion onto the new Heslington East campus which has received planning permission and is now in development.

### STRATEGY REVIEW

The Library and Archives strategy for 2005-2009 has been reviewed, at the midpoint of the strategy period. A set of key strategic themes have been identified:

- content of choice in context
- virtual space
- real space
- staff capability and capacity
- resourcing
- understanding and educating our customers and users
- quality and continuous improvement
- collaboration and partnership.

These themes are being developed as programme of work, defined in a detailed road-map and implementation plan.

### INFORMATION NEEDS FOR THE WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITY

The Library and Archives has been participating in a University initiative to define strategic information needs for the future, in line with University aspirations to build on its world-class status. A substantial review and information-gathering process has taken place, and a university-wide consultation on the proposals is now underway.

### DEVELOPING THE DIGITAL LIBRARY

The Library has been successful in bidding to the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) Repositories and Preservation Programme for a project to develop a digital library repository. The project is called SAFIR (Sound Archives Film Image Repository) and will run for 11 months, having commenced on 1 May 2007. This will form the first phase of a much larger virtual library initiative at York. Julie Allinson has been appointed as the Digital Library Manager, and is now building up a team of staff to support the initiative. We have recently chosen the FEDORA digital repository system as our preferred tool to build the infrastructure for the digital library.

The Library is also involved in a digitisation project to contribute materials to the ArtStor Collection. We are digitising a large number of slides from the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (CVMA) collection of medieval stained glass images which are held at our King's Manor Library site.

York also successfully bid with its White Rose partners (Leeds and Sheffield) to a different strand in the same JISC programme for the IncReASe (Increasing Repository Content through Automation and Services) project. The project is investigating and piloting an automated approach to gathering, indexing and presenting digital research publications in White Rose Research Online, our shared repository of research papers.

### DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COLLECTIONS AND FACILITIES

The Library is developing new collections and facilities to support two new departments at the University: Law and Theatre; Film and Television. New collections are being purchased, and a flexible study space will be provided for Law in the JB Morrell Library to support the problem-based learning focus of the undergraduate course.

### ONLINE INFORMATION LITERACY TUTORIALS

We have developed an initial set of three online information literacy tutorials, focusing on using the Library Catalogue, understanding and using journals, and evaluating websites. The tutorials are based on the Library's Information Literacy Generic Learning Outcomes which were developed in conjunction with a number of Academic departments in the University. The tutorials are available from the Library website at <http://www.york.ac.uk/library/elibrary/tutorials.htm>, and are also available through our VLE.



**IMPROVED OPENING HOURS**

The Library is now open from 08.30, on a self-service basis (Monday-Friday, not including the summer vacation). Feedback from users so far has been positive, and numbers using the library from 08.30 are growing.

**LIBRARY USER SURVEY 2008**

We will be conducting our biannual Library User Survey in May 2008. This year, we will be using the LibQual+ survey methodology. One of the benefits of LibQual+ is the ability to obtain comparable assessment information from peer institutions; this will enable us to benchmark our results against those of other university libraries, in order to identify how we are performing in relation to the sector as a whole.

Tracey Stanley  
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# Advice for authors

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*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.

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A copy of *SCONUL Focus* can be supplied on request to a member of the Editorial Board or from SCONUL's office at 102 Euston Street, London NW1 2HA, email: [sconul@sconul.ac.uk](mailto:sconul@sconul.ac.uk). An online version can be found via [www.sconul.ac.uk](http://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](mailto: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.



