

2023-26 STRATEGY

Our purpose and mission

SCONUL is the professional association for academic and research libraries in the UK and Ireland. Our members are research-intensive institutions such as Trinity College, Dublin and University College London, and specialist higher education providers like Scotland's Rural College and the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. Our wonderful national libraries are lynchpins of the SCONUL community which also includes libraries holding important national collections including the Royal Horticultural Society and the Tate Library.

We speak for this diverse membership with a single voice on the strategic issues facing the sector, advocating for the value and importance of libraries in teaching and learning, in the research process; in student success and in delivering our institutions' innovation and engagement agenda, for example in the drive for equality, diversity and inclusion and on sustainability.

We are led by our members, driven by their needs and informed by their priorities. Our reach relies on commitment by those at our member organisations who give a great deal of time to formal working groups and through contributions to projects, events and discussions. The SCONUL community is unstinting in its willingness to share intelligence, strategic insights and experience to meet the community's collective needs. This is our most valuable asset.

Our mission

We are passionate advocates for the value our members deliver, leading and supporting the community to create the environment that allows them to flourish for the benefit of their stakeholders, institutions and users.

Our aims



To drive towards a sustainable future for libraries in climate, social and economic terms.



To support innovation and the process of transformation of libraries to maximise the benefits to their institutions and their users.



To be an active agent for change, with and on behalf of our people, fostering an inclusive and diverse community and generating positive, creative solutions to sector challenges.



To be a passionate advocate for the value of libraries so that decisions about them are made in full knowledge of that value.



To be agile and responsive to the developing needs of our members and the changing environment in which they operate.



To provide leadership to the sector and to use our influence to shape the conversation within and beyond our community, locally and internationally.

Our plans for 2023-26

We inspire

Inclusivity and diversity

Fostering the development of a profession which better reflects our society in all its diversity through an active programme promoting and supporting change.

Creative conversations

Brokering creative conversations informed by quality data and research about future directions for our sector to enable our members to shape and prepare for that future.

Partnerships

Working openly, collaboratively and strategically with partner bodies within and beyond our community, locally and internationally to explore new opportunities and to deliver value for the community.

We support

Shared services

Providing and developing services which help members to meet the needs of their users such as the SCONUL Access Scheme and our benchmarking statistics.

Sharing knowledge

Producing resources including research reports, briefings, case studies, newsletters and news alerts to provide information and guidance to members about developments in HE and the library sector.

Mutual support

Facilitating professionals within our member libraries to connect and learn from one another through peer support and sharing information and practice.

We promote

The value of libraries

Advocating for the vital role that libraries play in the academic enterprise, in student wellbeing and success, and in broader engagement and innovation, highlighting the conditions for that success and supporting members with the evidence base and tools.

Representing the community

Representing the interests of our community with stakeholders, regulators and governments to ensure that policies develop in a way which enable libraries to deliver maximum value for their users.

Leading positive change

Generating positive proposals for change and exploring new opportunities for services and partnerships to create a positive environment for our libraries and professionals to operate.

We develop

Supporting the next generation

Delivering support for the next generation of aspiring, emerging and current leaders through formal and informal professional development opportunities which embrace and promote diversity.

Our own services

Reviewing and redeveloping our own services to maximise the benefits to our members, placing them at the centre of our decision-making.

Financial stewardship

Exploring new ways of working and new partnerships to ensure that we are maximising our income and the impact of our expenditure.

Our spheres of activity

We are at an exciting time for academic and research libraries. Libraries are partners in the academic enterprise, playing an essential role in teaching and learning, in the research process; in engagement, and are integrated into cross-institutional systems and processes.

This brings opportunities for the organisation to benefit from the specialist expertise of library professionals in supporting students, managing data and managing knowledge sharing and preservation, among other areas. As institutions drive towards digital transformation; embrace the open agenda long espoused by libraries and the associated shift in research culture; and place a greater focus on student support and wellbeing and on the role as universities as civic actors, libraries have important contributions to make.

We will explore the opportunities and challenges for libraries in supporting their institutions in four core areas:

Organisational development

We will explore:

- Developing our current workforce to support institutions' drive towards digital transformation.
- Generating the radical shift needed to deliver a diverse workforce that is truly representative of our society.
- New approaches to recruitment, retention and professional development to meet the HE recruitment challenge by coming together through networking, mentoring and peer support to enabling sharing practice and experience.

Sustainable content provision

We will explore:

- Models for journal provision post-transitional agreements while continuing to work closely with Jisc Collections and other partners on negotiations with publishers.
- Creative approaches to the provision of monographs and the development of a sustainable model for etextbook provision.
- Opportunities for collaboration on curating and creating collections and for knowledge sharing.

Services and systems

We will explore:

- The transformative potential, and practical application, of AI solutions for libraries and library interaction with AI technologies in higher education.
- Interrogating the market for library technology to foster competitiveness and value for money.
- The scope for technology-enabled innovation across the sector, spreading innovative practice and supporting early adoption.

Cross-cutting themes

We will also explore a number of cross cutting themes which apply across content, workforce and technology spheres:

- The drive towards net-zero and the sustainable library (library spaces, content provision and support).
- Digital transformation and visioning new models of library provision including transforming library spaces to meet emerging institution demand.
- Integrating the physical and digital library to create a positive user experience.

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