

Midlands Libraries Meeting

Library Seminar Room, University of Warwick Library, 11am-4pm Friday 11 October
2013

Agenda

1. Future of the SCONUL Statistics
2. Open Access: how is it working at institutional level; are there particular issues to flag nationally
3. Financial sustainability and the coming challenge of outsourcing
4. Potential for sharing services
 - Data management (e.g., is there a regional role for MidPlus as consortial storage)
 - Learning from other regions and countries e.g. WHELP, the Northern Collaboration etc.
 - EMALINK and WESLINK training and staff development programmes: possibility of merger?
5. Library Advocacy
6. Emerging Library Technologies/Trends
7. Other issues or news around the table
(e.g., does anyone else struggle with decent candidate pools for professional posts?)
8. Future meetings?

Attendees:

Robin Green (University of Warwick), Diane Job (University of Birmingham), Fiona Parsons (University of Wolverhampton), Nicky Whitsted (Open University), Caroline Taylor (University of Leicester), Judith Keene (University of Worcester), Emma Walton (Loughborough University), Deborah Findlay (University College Birmingham), David Parkes (Staffordshire University), Judith Andrews Birmingham City University, Chris Porter (Newman University), Pat Johnson (University of Derby), Paul Reynolds (University of Keele), Nick Smith (Aston University), Jo Webb (De Montfort University), Chris Powis (University of Northampton)

Note-taker: James Fisher (University of Warwick)

Apologies: Caroline Rock (Coventry University), Mike Berrington (Nottingham Trent University), Kathryn Greaves (Harper Adams University)

1. Future of SCONUL stats

- There are currently around 150 different questions to be completed for SCONUL stats which is a big undertaking for those completing them.
- Stats need to be looked at to make sure fit for purpose as there have been many changes since they were established in 1987 principally for heads of service to prove effectiveness of resource use and where there was a lack of resources.
- There will be consultation with the community about the changes shortly.
- How are people using them today? Responses:
 - Comparing overall finances, particularly for e-resources to make the case for more money.
 - Comparing with NSS data.
 - Interest mainly in the strategic dataset from some but not so much for others where spending profile is very different to other libraries and more granularity is needed.

Other comments:

- Concerns around comparisons – Are libraries counting the same thing?
- The way that spend is currently split is ok for some but not others.
- Concern around amount of time that is spent collecting the stats at institutions.

- Staff are protective about the stats collation. However, we do need to challenge the geekiness about data collection.
- Stats from 180 libraries across sector gives a picture of the situation.
- What about complementary datasets (KB+, etc.)? Could we withdraw questions covered by these?
- Data around learning analytics is core and if we could agree something around that it would be very powerful.

2. Open Access

RIN report into Open Access is due to be published soon looking at responses to the RCUK block grant and how funding is cut and reallocated.

This was summarised by RG who is involved in the group – presentation to be circulated
Discussion points:

- The group all felt that in future this will lead to a change in the way libraries are funded.
- Funding could shift from the Library to Research Support.
- It's unlikely there will be a fall in subscriptions soon.
- There were concerns over double dipping with Libraries being asked when their funding can be reduced as a result of the block grant.
- Beneficial to repositories as more departments are adding their publications.
- Advocacy events are being arranged with external speakers to publicise the grant.
- Only one institution present today is using the block grant to fund staff.
- Demand seems to be lower than anticipated for many. Reasons suggested:
 - Lack of awareness / understanding.
 - Some big areas are not Gold publication areas.
- Suggestion that there should be a national message that there needs to be advocacy with publishers outside the mainstream.
- What about renewing NESLi licences and linking this with subscriptions?
- This is linked with JISC Collections' desire to seek a mandate about negotiating with publishers on APC costs. Everyone in the room was supporting this.

3. Financial sustainability and coming challenge of outsourcing

Discussion around the potential for cutting costs and sharing services.

Collaboration / sharing services or outsourcing:

Examples:

- Bloomsbury LMS implementing Quali OLE at the University of London.
- SCURL & WHELP collaborations.
- University of Western Scotland shared LMS (FE, HE, LA).
- University of Wolverhampton LMS Support outsourced to Capita.
- Some universities / libraries are running schools now.

Drivers for implementing or investigating:

- Saving money.
- Outsourcing is happening in public libraries so why not in academic libraries?
- Questions from University management. E.g. why don't you think about getting a big Library store in Birmingham International to provide regional services with others?
Saving costs and thinking in terms of location.
- Might be forced into doing something like this so better to do it under your own control.

Concerns:

- Need to approach outsourcing with clear headed view of pros & cons. Be very clear about the outcome you want. Avoid hugely complex specs.

- There are tensions between outsourced services and University culture. E.g. outsourced security can be more like bouncers.
- Negotiation with contractors can take up a great deal of time.
- University management asking why you can't get together with other institutions and reduce the cost of e-resource subscriptions.

Suggestions to follow up:

- Value in SCONUL looking at this.
- Actions for future meetings of this group:
 - *Could pick up with contacts from Society of Chief Librarians for information about outsourcing in local government libraries. **Action: CT***
 - *Could look at shared collaborative opportunities and invite people already involved in these (e.g. from WHELFF) to come and talk. **Action RG/NW***
 - *Could approach Head of Libraries and Arts in London Borough of Croydon as they have just outsourced their Library Services. **Action: CT***

Lunch

Futurelearn (additional item)

NW ran through a Product Update presentation which Matthew Shorter had given about Futurelearn. Some highlights:

- Courses are starting now and there are 40,000 registered users across 20 universities running 2-3 MOOCs in the first instance.
- Futurelearn is currently a wholly owned company of the OU, but don't anticipate this will continue.
- There are concerns around international rights clearance as the learners signing up for the courses are global.
- First MOOCs are showing off, but what they will become later is unclear.
- Most universities are using it to drive a step-change in e-learning or for marketing.
- Now they are looking at proctored exams and MOOC accreditation coming into formal accreditation for the university.
- There was lots of pressure to deliver on time so there will probably be more developments over the next 6 months or so.
- *NW will send round a presentation with stats about learners and their profiles. **Action: NW***

4. Data Management for Sharing Services

Warwick is a member of the M5 Mid Plus sharing group.

There was a question recently at the steering group about whether we could have a consortial service around data hosting. Are others in the Midlands interested?

Discussion points:

- There must be an advantage in not reinventing the wheel and creating repositories all over the institution.
- It makes sense for big data that you have to keep.
- Questions that are being asked of departments at Warwick:
 - How much data do you have, what's the rate of creation/growth, what's the sensitivity, where are you storing it? Institutions don't know how much data they have or where the data is.
- There must be a role for librarians around data creation.
- Others are using case studies to understand the issues and the nature of the material.
- Warwick are about to recruit a Data Librarian to pull together the different strands of research data.
- Overall there does seem to interest in investigating this further

4. EMALINK / WESLINK

Discussion around combining the 2 groups' training events:

- The scale of the combined region and cost of hosting an event could be a problem.
- If distance is an issue events could be repeated in West Midlands and East Midlands.
- Attendance at some events can be patchy. At least 1 EMALINK was cancelled last year.
- We could look at an annual conference across the 2 regions.
- People find it useful to visit other libraries. It might be good to expand events to include the chance to look around and talk to peers at the host library.

- There seems to be interest in merging the 2 groups, but how would we take this forward?
- It would be courteous to refer this to the committees. However, there's no West Midlands equivalent of EMAL. Those West Midlands members in the room are happy to go ahead.
- What happens next? Discussion has focussed on training, but it's about more than that.
- How do we constitute ourselves?
- Successful consortia have had people tasked with doing things as part of their job.
- NoWAL has an officer and the Northern Collaboration has sponsors.
- Income can be generated from training events to cover staffing, etc.
- Consortia tend to grow around 1 or 2 key pieces of activity and other things accrue. If we start with a few modest strands of activity and don't worry too much about funding and governance these will follow. We've identified some key things already today (data storage, shared services & outsourcing, T&D) to start on.
- *Suggestion to see what help SCONUL could provide before the next meeting. They are exploring a pilot for the Northern Collaboration being part of SCONUL. Action: RG/NW*
- *We need pointers about how the Northern Collaboration works. Could this be arranged for the next meeting? Action: RG/NW*

5. Library Advocacy

Where does the Library sit within the University and how does the Library sit in terms of funding, relationships with IT departments?

How can we have a stronger voice in our institutions?

Discussion points:

- Identify issues (e.g. Open Access) and use them for different stakeholder groups.
- MOOCs are an opportunity starting with copyright & expanding into other areas (VLE, etc.)
- The biggest supporters of the Library often have a traditional view of the service so there is a risk of alienating them or playing to them.
- Who the Librarian reports to and where the Library is in the structure makes a big difference to the attention you get. Examples given:
 - Library is one of the few parts of administration not in the administration area which is useful to report to academics, so easier to get your case across.
 - Library is distinct from catering but managed in the same place.
- We need to stop having to explain complicated things to people. It's more important to have strategic, tactical conversations with people.
- It's important to give staff information to use to engage with departments and for staff to engage in active listening at programme boards and feed back to colleagues.
- Committees are often not that useful and one-to-ones are more important.
- It's about leadership development, developing us and how we operate and fostering and enabling people who work with us to operate.
- Talking to the wider peer group in the region enables us to understand their situation as the Library often has a different configuration to other departments (24/7, working with academics, students, technical issues, etc.).
- Setting up a Directors group (like the SCONUL deputies group) gives this opportunity.
- *Future agenda item: Analytics. Suggestion of talk about the LAMP Project.*

6. Technology

How do people get ideas and then implement them quickly when it comes to technology? Support for open source Library Systems can be outsourced, but how about digital content and access? How do you break the tyranny of platforms and authentication? The content is great but we still end up using proprietary platforms. Open Access will bring changes but not for a while.

Discussion points:

- Implementing technology change? Some libraries have budgets and spaces to look at new technology but aren't currently talking to each other. It would be useful to do this so the suggestion is that these libraries contact each other outside of these meetings.
- Caught between publishers and users. Publishers put on DRM to protect their investment but the libraries are seen as the bad guys.
- We should work more with publishers to show them the student experience is when accessing their resources as they have no concept of this.
 - A positive example of doing this was arranging a SAGE away day leading to them providing bursaries for individual students to help them understand the student view and they also ran focus groups for the launch of the discovery tool.
- There are also problems getting engagement within universities. JISC are developing case studies to try to illustrate the problem to senior management.
- Publishers are trying to strangle the e-books market.
- They are trying to develop the e-books per student model.
- *Who should we talk to about these issues?*
 - *Suggestions: UKSG, JISC, ALPSP, etc.*
- *We should discuss this further and invite some people to come and talk to us.*

7. Other issues & updates

- Recruitment: Everyone seems to have problems recruiting to higher level professional posts, whether advertising through jobs.ac.uk or CILIP.
- It could be a Midlands issue.
- CILIP reports much lower numbers of staff in their 20s working in professional posts.
- Is it our selection criteria? Should we be trawling from a wider pool?
- Changing the requirement for a library qualification from essential seemed to produce a better field of applicants. Maybe we should request library qualification or equivalent (teaching, etc.).
- OCLC Europe, Middle East & Africa conference to be held in South Africa on 24-25 February 2014 focussing on collaboration and sharing:
 - <http://www.oclc.org/en-europe/events/EMEARC.html>
- 5th International M-Libraries Conference in Hong Kong, 27-30 May, 2014:
 - <http://www.m-libraries.org/>

8. Next Meeting:

Suggested this is held at the Open University before Christmas or in early January. RG/NW to work on the agenda.