

13 June 2001

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Dear

**Research Support Libraries Group – Call for Evidence**

1. I am writing to all Heads of HE Institutions, as well as many others, to solicit your views on the future development of research support libraries in the UK. If possible I would much appreciate views both from senior research managers (for example, Pro Vice Chancellors (Research) and Deans of Faculty) and from librarians.

2. The four UK higher education funding bodies, in collaboration with the British Library and the national libraries of Wales and Scotland, have established a new strategic advisory group on research support libraries, which I have been asked to chair. This group will advise on the development of a national strategy to ensure that UK researchers in all disciplines have access to world class information resources. Our time scale is to look forward over the next decade or so. The group's membership and terms of reference are attached for your information.

3. The background to the group's establishment is a growing perception that

- providing all of the information resources required by UK researchers is beyond the capacity of any single library;
- no individual HEI can maintain library and information resources meeting the needs of all of its own researchers;
- we do not have in place adequate arrangements to ensure that researchers' needs are met through collaborative action; and
- developments in IT offer both a means of improving access and the challenge of a further increase in the volume of information to be managed.

4. Tackling these issues will in our view require a national plan for managing library and information resources and closer collaboration between HE and national libraries.

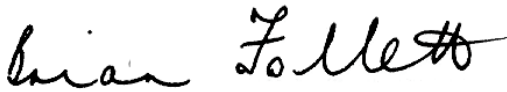
5. To inform its considerations the Group sees its first task as seeking the views of key stakeholders on the issues to be addressed and on possible ways forward. We invite your comments on these matters, and in particular on the following two groups of questions:

a. What are the **needs of UK researchers**, working at the forefront of their discipline, for access to research information sources; how do these needs vary between subject groups – natural sciences, social sciences and humanities – and between disciplines within these; and how do you envisage them developing over the next ten years?

b. What **provision** is required to meet these needs; how will that change as the needs change; what are the main **current gaps** in provision; and what structures and actions should be put in place to ensure that researchers have ready access to the full range of information resources to support their work?

6. Responses are invited by **14 September 2001** and should be sent to Vanessa Conte at HEFCE at the address above. Reply by email to [v.conte@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:v.conte@hefce.ac.uk) would be appreciated as this will aid the processing of responses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Follett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'F' and a distinct 't' at the end.

Sir Brian Follett  
Chair, Research Libraries Strategy Group

## **Research Support Libraries Group**

### **Membership of the Group**

Brian Follett (Chairman)

[Chairman, Arts and Humanities Research Board]

Professor Michael Anderson

[Senior Vice-Principal, University of Edinburgh]

Mr Bahram Bekhradnia

[Director of Policy, HEFCE]

Ms Lynne Brindley

[Chief Executive, The British Library]

Professor Robert Burgess

[Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester]

Dr Reg Carr

[Director of University Library Services and Bodley's Librarian, The University of Oxford]

Mr Andrew Green

[Librarian, National Library of Wales]

Professor Ian Halliday,

[Chief Executive, Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council]

Ms Mary Heaney,

[Director of Learning Resources, University of Wolverhampton]

Professor Arthur Lucas

[Principal, King's College London]

Ms Karen Stanton

[Director of Information Services, University of Nottingham]

## Research Support Libraries Group

### Terms of Reference

1. To make recommendations to the HE Funding Bodies\*, the British Library and the national libraries of Scotland and Wales on a national strategic framework and mechanisms for promoting collaboration in, and integration of the development and provision of library collections, their long-term management, and services to support research. This should include the following:
  - a. Further development of the distributed national research collections through stronger collaborative arrangements between HEIs, the national libraries and other research collections of national significance.
  - b. Within this context to receive relevant reports on library and information matters referred by the HE funding bodies, and recommend action. In addition to provide a focus for building on studies already commissioned by the BL/HEFCE Task Force and relevant RSLP supporting actions.
  - c. To recommend options for a long-term scheme to support integrated access to resources of national importance in the light of experience with the RSLP access model.
  - d. Review ways of taking forward, scaling up and deepening the impact of the access and collection co-ordination strands of the RSLP initiative in a UK-wide, co-ordinated way.
  - e. Further development of a co-ordinated strategy for and provision of materials in printed, electronic and digitised form.
  - f. To assess and make recommendations on how best to use the resources of JISC and the DNER team to facilitate this strategy.
  - g. The development of a strategy for improving the availability of information about research materials and their description, building on Full Disclosure.
  - h. The development of a UK-wide strategy for preservation, including digital preservation to support research and scholarship alongside the preservation of printed materials, and the requirements for technical capacity.
  - i. Commissioning of specialist studies in support of this agenda.

\* The Higher Education Funding Council for England, Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and the Department of Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment (Northern Ireland)