

## **Research Support Libraries Group**

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Research Support Libraries Group held on Friday 25 January 2002 at CentrePoint, London.

<b>Attendees:</b>	Brian Follett (Chair)	<b>Guests:</b>	Mr Ronald Milne
	Prof. Michael Anderson	<b>Secretariat:</b>	Ms Vanessa Conte
	Mr Bahram Bekhradnia		Mr Mike Crump
	Ms Lynne Brindley		Mr Paul Hubbard
	Prof. Robert Burgess		Mr Will Naylor
	Dr Reg Carr		
	Prof. David Eastwood		
	Mr Andrew Green		
	Prof. Ian Halliday		
	Ms Mary Heaney		
	Prof. Arthur Lucas		
	Ms Karen Stanton		

### **Introduction**

1. The Chair welcomed members and introduced the main theme of the meeting: Collaborative Collection Management (CCM).

### **Collaborative Collection Management – overview and key questions**

2. Paul Hubbard introduced the first paper and recommended that the Group draw on it as a framework for debate once they had heard the evidence in the following three papers.

### **Lessons from the RSLP**

3. Prof. Anderson, Chair of the RSLP Steering Group, presented a paper on the emerging experiences of CCM in the RSLP. He said that, although enthusiasm for collaborative discovery and disclosure was widespread, there had been few bids to the RSLP to support deeper resource sharing, which suggested either that the sector did not see a need for this type of activity or did not view it as practicable.

### **Collaboration in research library provision: International comparisons – final report**

4. Will Naylor introduced the final report from the consultants which demonstrated that while the UK leads in several areas of research provision, such as electronic resources and collection mapping, there are other areas where the UK can learn from research libraries in other countries, including bibliographic access and consortial management. In terms of successful deep resource sharing, however, there were very few examples anywhere in the world.

## **RSLP Barriers to Resource Sharing study – interim report**

5. Ronald Milne presented this interim report which had been kindly produced by consultants working on behalf of the RSLP. The consultants reported that, in their opinion, the greatest barrier to collaboration was that no convincing case for it had been made to the sector. The report also mentioned a number of other barriers presented by librarians, which the consultants regarded as perceived rather than real.

### **CCM Debate**

6. The Group then returned to the overarching theme of the meeting and a wide-ranging debate ensued.

7. Several members questioned the assumption that CCM was inherently beneficial to researchers and cautioned the Group to consider its consequences. In particular, CCM threatened to some degree the autonomous approach to acquisition based on the expertise of faculty, which had served the interests of researchers well for many years.

8. The librarians among the Group, however, argued that the prevailing autonomous approach to collection management was under great stress because of the rapidly escalating cost of new resources. This stress had begun to manifest itself in reduced acquisition of monographs, caused in the main by increases in the cost of journals. There was strong anecdotal evidence for this.

9. Members agreed that the sector's apparent disinclination to engage in resource sharing flowed mainly from individual institutions' wariness about the potential impact of collaboration on their primary teaching and research missions. However, reluctance to engage in deeper collaboration was increasingly hard to reconcile with the efficient use of public money and the Group needed to recommend some progress in this area.

10. The Group debated the future relationship between the national libraries and the HE sector and the potential for a distributed national collection. It was generally agreed that a national collection delivered by local partners was possible, particularly in the sphere of electronic resources. Members agreed that it was not clear what benefits regional networks could add to this even if they could be created, and supported the proposition that a national reference collection should be maintained as a single entity.

11. It was suggested that if researchers could find most research materials they required locally but had to access a minority from elsewhere then this was a workable model. Distributing resources more widely than this would probably meet with resistance.

### **Universal access and borrowing rights**

12. The Group agreed that a national universal access and borrowing scheme for UK researchers which was free at the point of use was desirable in principle alongside the

creation of an UKNUC and subject to the construction of a robust business model which compensated for the cost of marginal demand. The success of reciprocal borrowing within Wales and the M25 Consortium demonstrated that the fear of “swamping” was probably unwarranted. It was agreed that the Group should follow-up on the barriers to external use of electronic resources. Reservations were expressed about the exclusion of taught postgraduates from a universal scheme.

### **UK National Union Catalogue (UKNUC)**

13. Members agreed to support the construction of the UK union catalogues for serials (SUNCAT) and monographs (UKNUC). The Group also agreed that links with other potential funders should be explored to facilitate the possible inclusion in the union catalogues of public libraries, learned societies and other institutions.

### **Document delivery**

14. Members agreed that the British Library Document Supply Centre at Boston Spa was a crucial resource and should be strengthened.

### **Overlaps analysis, collection mapping and retroconversion**

15. The Group was in favour of overlaps analysis in principle but felt that tools to help researchers discover more resources (collection mapping and particularly retroconversion of resources which are not catalogued or catalogued on paper) should have a higher priority.

### **Collaborative retention**

16. Members agreed that a collaborative approach to preservation and relegation was desirable in principle, but were also aware that significant administrative and cultural barriers existed. The group agreed that a case could be made for a national preservation collection but recognised some materials did become redundant within short periods, such as STM journals. The Chair proposed that a pragmatic starting point might be a pilot study in the area of STM journals, where significant overlaps existed.

### **JISC Scholarly Communications Group – interim report**

17. Dr Carr presented the interim report of this sub-group, which proposed short, medium and long – term strategies to tackle the crisis in scholarly communications. He emphasised that the biggest challenge for the sector was to understand and alter the behaviour of authors and readers. Members commended the sub-group on its interim findings and looked forward to the final version.

## **Matters to Report**

### **Call for Evidence – further analysis of responses**

18. The further analysis was noted. Members discussed the importance to researchers of non-printed media including audio and video.

### **Librarians' focus group sessions – feedback**

19. The report was noted.

### **Researchers' use of libraries – progress report**

20. Prof. Burgess informed members that the full survey was in progress and would report to the next meeting.

### **Costing Study – progress report**

21. The progress report was noted.

### **Date of next meeting**

22. The next meeting of the RSLG is confirmed for **Monday 18 March 2002** at the HEFCE offices, Centre Point, London.