

University of Sussex
Library Consultative Group

Notes of the 92nd meeting held on Wednesday, 17 November, 1999

Present: C. Antonow (SOC), Ms. F. Arthur (Library clerical staff), S. Ashby (CCS), Ms. M. Baitri (BIOLS), K. Berggreen, (Bookshop), T. Boeckers (EURO), T. Collett (Biols), Ms. E. Crago, (SPRU), Ms. H. Darvill (Student Union), R. Discombe (USCS), Mrs. M. Fieldhouse (Library), P.A. Garton (STARS), Ms. S. Hinchliffe (CCE), Ms. S. Irani (AFRAS), M.G. Lewis (Library Faculty), R. Momodu (IDS), Dr. J. Peyton-Jones, (ENGG), Dr. J. Pryor (USIE), Ms. S. Hinchliffe (CCE), Ms. G. Kiai (Legal Studies), (Dr. L. Martell (SOC), Ms. L. Rashdan (GRCE), Ms. S. Reilly (Student Union), Mrs. M. Roberts (HUMS), K.D. Sinha (ENGG), D. Weir (COGS), N. Wilsdon (AFRAS), Dr. G. Wraith (SMS),

Apologies: Ms. B. Merchant (SPRU), Dr. A. Potts (AFRAS), Prof. C. Watts (EAM),

717. The notes of the 91st meeting and of the special extra meeting of 22 June 1999 were confirmed.

718. Matters arising.

- Changes arising from the 1999/2000 budget.

Paper [LCG/92/3](#) reported on implementation of several specific changes resulting from the disappointing Library allocation.

The cancellations resulting from the summer periodicals review would be effective from January. A further full periodicals review would be held later this session and if the budget for next session were similar to this one further cuts would be necessary.

The Librarian was asked if any pressure could be brought on publishers or the University. He said there were several approaches:

- 1) Persuade the Librarian that periodicals should take a larger share of the Library budget (though it had risen from 12 to 20% in recent years already and he was of the opinion that this was the maximum acceptable proportion).
- 2) Persuade the institution to allocate more funds to the Library. However, the University's conscious strategy was to increase spending on academic units at the expense of support units, to enhance performance in the next RAE. Members of the group should make any contrary case through committees to senior management.
- 3) Persuade the government to allocate more money to higher education.
- 4) Persuade publishers to change their pricing policy. An interesting American initiative, SPARC (Scholarly Publishing & Academic resources coalition) was noted: libraries were guaranteeing sales to not for profit publishers who introduced titles in competition with those which are subject to biggest rip-offs

Noted existing co-operation over provision of periodicals locally, especially with the University of Brighton. Neither Library, however, could guarantee continuing provision with each making cuts at various times.

The next periodicals review would follow the normal pattern of a full review; there would be no targets for cutting one subject more than another, but votes would probably alter the relative levels of support for different subjects. Noted that the way electronic voting would be delivered was soon to be finalised. Comprehensive participation was most important.

- Short Loan.

Noted the summer vacation change to a one week Short Loan period, which continued into the autumn term, the purpose of which in the latter period was to reduce the number of transactions, thereby reducing Library staff workloads pro rata to falls in staff levels in accordance with budget provision; this had produced more criticism than appreciation. The reduction in Short Loan transactions compared with the same period last year had been approx. 20%. Fewer transactions were satisfactory from the point of view of the budget (a saving equal to approx. 2½ Library Assistant posts) but not for the availability of book stock.

Discussed the effect of this change on other Library services, especially Reserve. Copyright issues constrained options, as did the unacceptability of any significant increase in staff workloads. Study packs would be the way forward wherever funding is available.

Also discussed the problem of overlapping use of books by different courses at the same time. This could be reduced by means of the reading list system if sufficient notice was received.

The meeting regretted the reduction in service, which was considered to be having a deleterious effect on the University's teaching. Neither students nor teachers had been given a chance to replan their studying or teaching so they wouldn't have had chance to put the work in required for preparation of study packs and, similarly, students were surprised at the start of term that availability of books was less than they had thought. It was felt that these kinds of changes should not be decided on immediately before they were implemented and it was hoped that this year the Librarian would be informed of next year's budget in good time to avoid any repetition.

In conclusion, the Group asked the Librarian to report to higher committees its dismay at the reduction in availability, and at the insufficient notice of the change in Short Loan arrangements (understood to be due to very delayed confirmation of the Library allocation for 1999/2000.)

- Weekend 0 use levels. The figures probably understated the measure of demand because of the relative lateness of the decision to open the Library on this weekend (which had been funded opportunistically from savings associated with the timing of Easter in 2000). It was considered important for the Library normally to open on the revision weekend at the beginning of the Spring term, so next summer an experiment reducing staffing on weekends in June would take place to see whether it is possible to achieve sufficient savings then to generate resources to open on the late September/early October weekend also.

[Attendance and Activity Figures](#)

[Figures for Borrowing](#)

719. The Group received the Librarian's Annual Report, 1998/99. The spending on binding of periodicals was queried. The Librarian explained that the number of periodicals bound had fallen from 80 to 50% over the years. Now only vulnerable titles and those with a large number of parts which easily became out of order were bound. No further economies were planned, but members were invited to let the Librarian know of binding which appeared unnecessary in subjects well known to them.

720. [Librarian's Report](#) May-November 1999 was received. The Librarian further reported that use of University publications, official and unofficial, had increased following the reorganisation noted in his paper.

He emphasised that at the beginning of August services would be modified substantially for a few days when the new computer was brought into use. The whole Library would not be closed but one or two services might be shut down for limited periods; information would be provided in due course.

721. [Drop in sessions](#). Noted the paper reporting the introduction of drop-in sessions on library and information skills this autumn term. Low takeup had continued though appreciation had been expressed by those attending and the sessions would be repeated, with an earlier start, from Week 0 next year. The low takeup raised the question of resource priorities; small groups like those reported were uneconomical: could they be justified? The group was asked to report on the sessions to their schools and seminar groups. It was suggested that the sessions should be advertised at the head of printed reading lists and on catalogue screens, also via main registration sessions and in common rooms. With better takeup the undoubted benefits could be delivered much more economically.
722. [Talis](#). It was reported that there was still much work to do to get the new computer up and running in time. Some specific issues had been noted for comment/discussion:
- a) The Group discussed whether official notices should be sent to Library users by Email - which would be possible with the new system, and would be the Library's preference. Various communication methods were used in the University and it was felt that formal communication with students should be a matter of University policy; registration, assessment, etc, matters were still communicated on paper. The Librarian was asked to raise this question with senior management maybe suggesting some experimentation.
 - b) The report of possible combined photocopy/library cards raised the question of campus-wide identity smart cards. The group heard that a small group in the Administration were looking into the issue but no outcome could be expected in time for the developments related to the new Library system; the Library would hope to make any of its changes forward compatible with likely institution-wide developments. Initiatives elsewhere had received major input from external sources (banks, etc.). No higher education institutions had sufficient funds to act independently.
 - c) Standard loan policies. The Group thought that the treatment of weekend days for the purposes of establishing loan periods should normally be consistent throughout the Library.
 - d) Borrowing entitlements. A request was made for consideration of special facilities for 4th year SMS students on "M Math" courses, not necessarily increased borrowing entitlements or other privileges which would create expense to the Library. The group discussed this request. The Librarian stated that special arrangements from those individuals who could objectively justify a particular claim would always be considered but this request was not covered by that policy. Some members said that no special arrangements for groups should be made other than on academic grounds. The Librarian undertook to examine the situation in more detail and to report back to the February meeting.
 - e) A plea would in due course be made for users' co-operation in returning outstanding loans due to the need to update loan records prior to conversion to the new system. Similarly, there would be a campaign to clear outstanding fines.
723. Procedures for the recovery of leavers' overdue books. It was explained that each year approx. 2,500 people cease to be registered students. Many hundreds of the Library's books are still on loan to them when this happens, when the incentive to return them is not always as strong as it might be. It is in the interests of all other users that return of these books is achieved as soon as possible, because once a leaver has received his/her degree and left the University, there is no effective hold on them. A specific invoice concentrates the mind where plain reminders do not and a substantial number of loans come back quite quickly on receipt of an invoice. The procedure involves the Library in substantial cost and it seems quite proper for this to be recovered too, irrespective of whether the books are returned. Large sums can be involved, and some complaints have been pursued at Vice-Chancellor level (unsuccessfully). Discussions are proceeding with the Administration as to whether to change Library procedures and stop lending books to leavers in their last term sufficiently early for the return date to allow the University time to threaten not to allow borrowers with outstanding loans to have their degree. Depending on the outcome, it might be worth making even more than at present of the level of the administration charge. Members were not in favour of any weakening of the general Library position on this.

It was pointed out that PGCE students needed to prepare academic work close to the end of the summer term, therefore this suggested system may work for most but not for that group. There should be one procedure for people whose academic work was finished and another for special cases.

724. Any other business.

- A request for double sided photocopying would be looked into. In the past it had been decided that too much staff time would be needed for instruction and dealing with paper jams. It was suggested that instruction could be included in the drop-in sessions.
- A request for lockers was noted. It had been hoped to provide them as part of the Library extension but they were eliminated from the plans when no suitable space could be found: lockers inside the Library security system would give rise to unissued books being hidden in them, lockers outside the security system would have to be in a very congested Library basement area. It was agreed that there was an institution-wide need for lockers.
- Assistive technology room. There were delays in fully commissioning this, due to the long term sick leave of the responsible librarian.
- Requests for extension of Short Loan period for students with special needs. The Librarian would allow a longer period if the needs of a particular individual justified it, but now that the standard Short Loan period was the same as the week, which had usually been the agreed extension in the past, fewer such special arrangements could be expected.
- North door. A detailed quote for installation of a card controlled door was awaited. Regular users would have swipe cards to operate the door, thereby eliminating the delays in staff attendance which sometimes arise at present, and a security system to go through.