Library Course Collections: Budget Proposal

Brief description of the paper

The paper outlines concerns that the Library has around the provision of course collections and seeks support from Library Committee for establishing a pilot course collections allocation, using a nominal allocation which is linked to the Talis Aspire Resource Lists tool, irrespective of College or School.

Action requested

The Committee are asked to consider the paper, and support a pilot initiative linking a centralised course collections allocation to the Talis Aspire Resource Lists tool.

Resource implications

Does the paper have resource implications? Yes, use of a nominal allocation from the library collections purchasing budget in 2014/15 to pilot the creation of a centralised course collections fund for 2015/16.

Risk Assessment

Does the paper include a risk analysis? No

Equality and Diversity

Has due consideration been given to the equality impact of this paper? Yes. EqIA screening exercise will be conducted and if required, a full EqIA will be done.

Freedom of information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Originator of the paper

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Library Course Collections

Background

The Library plays a central role in supporting students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes through the provision of course collections identified on reading/resource lists. In recent years, the service demands in relation to course collections have increased due to a growth in student numbers, as a result of better engagement with course organisers and from greater expectations from the student community.

The University is currently paying attention to student experience in relation to reading/resource lists through the Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) Project.

Current provision

The Library has been actively seeking to improve the provision of course collections and has already introduced new services:

1. The E-Reserve service to digitise parts of books/journals only available in print for the VLE;
2. The High Use Books (HUB) Collection in the Main Library (along with Reserve collections in each of the Site Libraries) providing a high-turnover, up to date collection of resources where reading lists are known;
3. Patron Driven Purchasing of e-books, and the introduction of large e-book collections providing ready online availability of course materials;
4. The Talis Aspire Resource Lists tool, to make it easier for course organisers to provide information on compulsory and secondary resources to students on taught programmes.

However, there remain concerns amongst Library staff about how taught courses are being supported by the Library. The Library knows that there are unmet demands from students for the full provision of course materials for taught courses, as evidenced in, for example, the free-text responses to recent surveys.

Issues needing to be addressed

Library staff held a workshop early in 2014 to consider the current issues around the provision of course collections. In summary, staff identified one issue (inadequacy of coverage) and two causes (budget allocations and the process of accessing services).

From the surveys and other feedback, it is clear that the major concern is inadequacy of coverage - i.e. whether the required resource is actually available within the library, whether there are enough copies available, and whether there is a digital copy suitable for supporting the number of students on a course. The library is aware that the number of
Print Reserve and E-Reserve lists fall well short of the number of programmes being taught across the University. It is clear that not all resource lists are being provided to the Library, as necessary to support the taught programmes.

The causes of this issue appear to centre around two areas:

1. **Limitations within the Library collections purchasing budget at the College and/or the School level allocations**: In recent years, all Schools in Science & Engineering, and some Schools in Humanities & Social Science have been unable to acquire all necessary course materials, as they have spent their full books budgets early in the financial year. This budget limitation may be setting an expectation with course organisers that recommendations will not be fulfilled, and therefore are not worth making. Evidence from other Universities has shown that creating a dedicated course collections budget can improve the availability of resources and the fulfilment against actual demand. Example institutions include Glasgow, Manchester, and King’s College London who have all stated the derived benefits, which include an increase in recommendations for course material purchases to the library. Current estimates suggest that at Edinburgh, the Library currently spends around £300,000pa on the provision of course materials from the College library allocations (in 2012/13 around £170,000 was spent on print books and around £130,000 on e-books). Work is still to be undertaken to clarify the full expenditure during 2013/14.

2. **The overly complex process of recommending and making available course material through the Library**: Currently, course organisers are required to provide information on resources required for taught programmes via the book recommendation forms on the Library’s website. In addition, they are required also to contact the E-Reserve and/or HUB Reserve teams to ensure that print resources be made available in the right way. For each service, specific information is required on, e.g. how many items should be ordered, the number of students on a course, etc. Each of these services are currently based in separate teams, who use different tools to manage the services and these complexities may be seen to be off-putting for course organisers. The Library intends to bring these areas together to improve efficiency. The new Talis Aspire resource lists service may offer this opportunity, where content type and criteria (e.g. ‘essential’, ‘recommended’ or ‘further reading’) and student numbers could direct purchasing from the course collections budget. By unifying the access points, it is hoped that course organisers will be encouraged to provide appropriate information to the Library in a timely manner to improve the end-to-end workflow and thereby student satisfaction.

**Recommendations to Library Committee**

At its meeting in May, Library Committee indicated its support for further exploration of opportunities around creating a centralised course collections allocation within the Library collections purchasing budget.
In order to support the improvement in the provision of course collections material, the Library now recommends the following actions:

1. Establishing an allocation for 2014/15: setting aside a nominal allocation of £30k to pilot the feasibility of a centralised course collections allocation. This allocation should be joined up with the Talis Aspire Resource Lists tool and items sent for review to the Library marked ‘essential’ would be purchased and made available in the HUB/Print Reserve and/or E-Reserve collection. Should this approach prove effective, it is proposed that a fully defined centralised course collections allocation is then made available for use by all three Colleges from the start of 2015/16.

2. Recording and monitoring during 2014/15: continuing to record and monitor the book recommendation forms for course collections requests in order to report on through the financial year, which will assist the Library in moving to a centralised course collections allocation from the start of 2015/16.

3. Making organisational changes in Library & University Collections during 2014/15: this will include using Talis Aspire as the main communication tool between the service areas in the Library for course collections, and combining separate teams to undertake the tasks across E-Reserve and Print Reserve.

4. Seeking student feedback during 2014/15: proactively seeking more feedback in relation to course collection services from both undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

5. Addressing new course approval processes: continuing to work with each College to ensure that all library related issues, especially those around collections, are being fully addressed at the appropriate time.

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e/course collections paper for Library Committee