The University of Edinburgh

Library Committee

8th February 2011

Agendum 3

Academic strategy for library materials

Brief description of the paper
Building on previous discussions, this paper presents a draft strategy for library materials, covering academic and resource issues. The paper also has a section on resources for library materials for feeding into the current planning round.

Action requested
Library Committee is asked to discuss the questions interspersed through the paper, and to advise if the developing strategy is the right strategy, and to consider issues on resourcing library materials.

Resource implications
Library materials represent a significant expenditure for the University and Information Services. It is important to have an effective collection, and the paper identifies ways of ensuring the collection is appropriate to the University’s needs. The paper also addresses issues on how the library materials should be resourced within the University.

Risk Assessment
Risk issues are not covered in the paper, but there are risk issues in ensuring that researchers and students have access to the right materials for their work.

Equality and Diversity
Does the paper have equality and diversity implications?
No

Freedom of Information
Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

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February 2011
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Academic strategy for library materials

Introduction
Subsequent to discussions on the paper “Library materials budget: development of an academic strategy” at Library Committee, College Library Committees, with College senior management and others, this “Academic strategy for library materials” has been drafted for consultation. It has sections on academic need, and resources and value for money. Library Committee and College Library Committees are asked to consider whether this is the appropriate strategy.

In parallel, Information Service is addressing issues about the library materials budget in the planning round. Library Committee and College Library Committees are asked to consider how library materials should be resourced. This will then be included in the strategy.

The paper below is punctuated with questions for discussion, and contains some explanatory material which will be removed from the finalised strategy.

Academic strategy for library materials

1. Strategic aim

“To provide a collection of library materials to support world class research, learning and teaching taking account of academic need and value for money.”

The University of Edinburgh provides books and journals in digital and print form as an integral part of the academic infrastructure to support current and future research, teaching and learning by the members of the University. Increasingly this is provided in digital format. These items can be used immediately after purchase, or over many years. The collection needs to be constantly reviewed and refreshed in order that it provides the collections which remain fit for purpose for research, teaching and learning in Edinburgh. The value for money of the collection also needs to be constantly reviewed.

Question 1: This strategy is about how to achieve this strategic aim. Is this the right strategic aim?

2. Academic need

The collection must support the academic need of all parts of the University—undergraduate, postgraduate, research in all disciplines. The collection needs to be responsive, with new materials being purchased to support new needs, for example in support of new courses and new research area—the corollary of this is that we should be prepared to cease purchasing in areas which are not active, unless there is a need to build or maintain a collection for the future.

The collection needs to support the University’s position as world-class. There is emerging evidence of correlation between expenditure on library materials and research outputs, and we will follow the developing research in this area. We will also provide metrics in order to ensure that Edinburgh’s position does not drop in comparison to comparator universities, where possible providing this information at a disaggregated disciplinary level.

We have a Collections Policy to help with decision making about purchasing. We now prefer to purchase digital materials, where these are available, although there are many circumstances in which this is neither desirable nor possible.

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1 http://www.libcttee.isg.ed.ac.uk/docs/open/PaperB,081210.pdf
2 http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/information-services/about/policies-and-regulations/operational-policies/collections
Many stakeholders are involved in deciding on what to buy and what not to buy, including academic staff, students, and library staff.

**Question 2:**
*Do the issues above reflect Edinburgh’s aspirations for its library collection?*

### 3. Resources and value for money

**Costs**
The provision of the library materials is a significant cost for the University. There are direct costs in acquiring materials and staff and operating costs in describing, curating and making them available. In 2009-2010, the cost of acquiring materials was £4.4m. Of this £720k was from sources other than the core Information Services budget. \(^3\) Recent calculations in Information Services based on purchase and description of c. £5.3m in 2008-2009\(^4\) representing about 25% of the IS budget. VAT is charged on all digital resources.

**Marketplace and procurement**
The marketplace for acquiring these items is complex. There are a small number of very significant publishers, who often make their materials available as an aggregated “bundle”, and a long tail of smaller publishers and suppliers, often important in specific disciplines.

Annual journal price inflation is running at double the rate of RPI since 2000. The fact that library materials are primarily priced in non-sterling currencies also has an impact on purchasing power.

Librarians are now collectively examining ways of constraining these costs, both through collaborative purchasing as a shared service and by negotiating collectively more aggressively with publishers, particularly on bundled deals. This is likely to achieve some cost reductions, but may not be a magic bullet for reducing costs. Collaborative purchasing comes with some compromises about content. In the longer term, a new model of scholarly publishing in response to the digital age may emerge, but this is likely to be some years away.

**Resource allocation**
For many years, the library materials budget was managed as a central budget, with the costs of reinstatement of purchasing power each year (sometimes including marginal increases of reductions) being provided by the allocation of a grant to the Library. Recently, the situation has been less coherent. The largest proportion of the budget is still a centrally provided resource, via the Information Services budget. Within Information Services, the proportion of the budget devoted to library materials has been maintained. To varying degrees, Colleges and Schools have topped up this budget.

This central grant is divided amongst the Colleges and Schools according to agreed formulae. The first allocation is to Colleges via the Income and Expenditure Attribution Model. CHSS and CS&E then divide this amongst their Schools according to different allocation models, while CMVM retains a largely central budget.

**Supporting interdisciplinarity**
Where a set of library materials (e.g. single books or the output from one publisher) are used by only one discipline, it is relatively easy to understand the user group; but increasingly, as we aggregate purchases into bundles or with other institutions the usage of this set of materials is interdisciplinary.

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\(^3\) CHSS £385k, CS&E £160k, Roslin £70k, School of Law £50k, NHS £45k

\(^4\) Costs of acquisition and description only. Does not include costs of circulation of print materials and digital library costs in making digital resources available.
across the University. The current model of resource allocation, whether at College level or at the School level, can mitigate against interdisciplinarity.

These issues have been considered many times, for example in a Collections Review carried out in 2008\(^5\). Since then, and in different financial times, it is clear that a number of other organisations, including both UK and US universities, are consolidating their expenditure into central funds to ensure maximum availability of resource.

**Value for money**
The Library will work to provide value for money in purchasing, through collaboration in procurement and hard negotiation with publishers. We will also provide, on an annual basis, metrics about usage and cost in order to allow decisions about value for money to inform decision-making.

**Question 3**
- Has the Committee any comments on the resources issues outlined above?

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\(^5\) [http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/libcom/PapersApr08/a3apr08.pdf](http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/libcom/PapersApr08/a3apr08.pdf)
Resourcing for library materials

As we move into more difficult times, the Colleges and Information Services working together need to reach agreement about the way forward, addressing the following questions. Library Committee is asked to respond to these resources related questions which will feed into the planning process.

**Question 4**

1. Does the University—specifically the Colleges—wish to reduce, maintain, or increase its expenditure on library materials?

**Question 5**

2. How does the University wish to manage the library materials budget? There are 3 possible models each with benefits and disadvantages:
   a. Managed centrally, ensuring proper balance between subject areas across the University?
      
      Benefits: easier and more efficient management, enhanced ability to negotiate good deals from publishers, supports interdisciplinarity
      
      Disadvantages: less easy to ensure proper balance between subject areas;
   b. Mixed model, with some funding being provided centrally and allocated according to an agreed formula with the possibility of Colleges or Schools topping this funding up?
      
      Benefits: Colleges can top up to the level they wish
      
      Disadvantages: different level of provision if Colleges act differently
   c. Funding from Colleges and/or Schools?
      
      i. Benefits: funding lies where it is created
      
      ii. Disadvantages: dissagreement; loss of bigger picture; difficulties with managing procurement; does not support interdisciplinarity

Sheila Cannell
2 Feb 2011