Brief description of the paper

This paper raises a number of questions about the library materials budget, and poses questions for the Committee to consider. The answers to these questions will inform the development an academic strategy for the library materials budget.

Action requested

The Committee is asked to consider the questions at the end of each section and to provide evidence and data which can be used in the strategy.

Resource implications

The library materials budget represents 25% of the core Information Services budget, so it is important to get the strategy right in the current financial climate.

Risk Assessment

There is no risk assessment in the paper, but not having the appropriate materials for research and teaching is a risk for the University.

Equality and Diversity

Does the paper have equality and diversity implications? No

Freedom of Information

Can this paper be included in open business? Yes

Originator of the paper

Sheila Cannell
Director of Library Services
December 2010
Edinburgh University Library Committee

Library materials budget: development of an academic strategy

In the current financial situation, we must consider how to manage the library materials budget, which including staff costs to process the materials, at 25% of Information Services core budget, is a significant investment for the University. In 2009-2010, we spent £4,373,639, which we used to purchase 17,153 books plus c 10,000 e-books\(^1\) and 22,249 journals\(^2\), including 1,579 print only journals.

The paper below highlights some issues with questions for Library Committee to consider. The overall question for the Committee to address is whether the collection in Edinburgh is fit for purpose at the moment, and what impact any cuts in the materials budget will have on research, teaching and learning. It may be useful to consider whether there is a point at which a drop on expenditure on the library collection would preclude world-class research and learning.

It is worth highlighting that a drop in the materials budget of 1% would have the impact of reducing purchasing power by c 3%-4%, because of the anticipated impact of publisher inflation.

The discussion in Library Committee, College Library Committees and with other groups will be used to formulate an academic strategy for the library materials budget.

1. Correlation with research outputs
Recent, as yet unpublished, evidence from the Research Information Network (RIN), shows links between investment in e-journals, the use of e-journals and research success. This is part of continuing work by RIN to look at the Return on Investment of expenditure on library materials. A diagram from RIN showing the linkages appears below\(^3\):

Understanding e-journal investment, use and research outcomes

Conclusions in summary

This diagram summarises the previous discussion and enables us to get more a sense of directionality.

There appear to be three main drivers. The first is that investment drives use (actually it is a precondition for it). The reverse argument, that use drives library spending is weak, probably because of the bundled nature of journal purchasing.

Direct linkages between library investment and research success are weak, but then the two things being measured: spending decision on journals and subsequent research performance metrics are a long way from one another in time as well as conceptually.

The summary model suggests a positive feedback loop between the use of e-journals and research outcomes. This is completely intuitive. The beauty of this model is that it shows that use is a strong predictor of research success and the biggest factor in the model by some distance.

Limitations
This is a small-scale study to explore the concepts behind path modelling to see if they could be used in studies of library return on investment. But it looks promising...

The Committee is asked to consider how a reduction of expenditure on library materials might impact on research outputs?

---

\(^1\) Primarily in e-book publisher collections

\(^2\) This figure excludes conference proceedings.

\(^3\) www.rin.ac.uk
2. Deciding what to buy
It is important that we buy the right material to suit the academic need. We receive regular requests to add to the collection. Inadequacies in the collection come up as an issue in the surveys we carry out.

_The Committee is asked to provide examples of deficits in the collection._

3. Ensuring what we buy is well used
We should ensure that we get the maximum value from what we do buy. The recent procurement of a new resource discovery system and the enhancement of the Catalogue—are intended to ensure that what we do buy can be easily located and well used. In examining usage, we need to be aware that the usage patterns vary between books and journals—in particular the timescale over which books in the humanities may be used is very different from the timescale over which journals are used in the sciences.

The charts below show how our annual usage in 2008-2009, both loans and article downloads, compares with the some other Russell Group universities[^4] and suggests that there may still be more value we can extract from our existing collection.

[^4]: Data from SCONUL statistics 2008-2009. Not all universities provided all the data required for the analysis.
The Committee is invited to give examples of we can extract more value from the existing collection.

4. Deciding what not to buy
It is undoubtedly the case that not everything we buy is used to the same extent, and we need to perfect the ways in which we monitor and review usage, so that we can decide to cancel, or not buy, materials which will be least used. The recent experience in the College of Science and Engineering has shown how difficult and time-consuming such decisions are for both the College and for Information Services staff.

As already stated, patterns of usage, and methods of monitoring usage vary. We have already and will continue to monitor the cost per usage of electronic journals. It is much more difficult, costly and time-consuming to provide robust usage information of print journals and books to help with decision making.

Are usage and cost per usage the most important indicators? Are there some items that we should buy, even knowing that they will be little used over many years? How should we decide which items fall into this category and how shall we justify them against the purchase of items of more immediate use?

5. Negotiating good prices for what we do buy
We not only have to buy the right stuff, but we have to pay the right price for it. We will continue to work to seek value for money is everything we buy. In particular, collaborative purchasing has proved a good way forward for both books and journals. Collectively with other organisations, we have better buying power, and we will exploit this as much as we can—although it may mean the loss of some autonomy in purchasing decisions. The use of JISC Collections, the development of the Scottish Higher Education Digital Library, and other collaborative purchasing schemes have given Edinburgh considerable additional content at good value.

Two major UK renegotiations are due for content to be delivered with effect from 2012—Elsevier and Wiley Blackwell. Together these represent about 30% of the library materials budget. RLUK (the
librarians of the Russell Group) are acting together in order to get the maximum negotiating power with these publishers.  

Is the Committee is supportive of maximising value through collaborative action, even where this may reduce choice?

6. The use of bundles

The use of bundles has been the subject of discussion, because it means that we buy, as part of the bundle both what we previously elected to buy in print and also additional materials. However, we are finding that what we choose to buy is not necessarily a good predictor of use. For example, previously subscribed titles in the Elsevier (Science Direct) bundle of (c400 titles) account for 57% of the usage, and previously unsubscribed titles (c1400) account for 43% of use.

For the Elsevier (Science Direct) bundle of 1800 titles, we are paying €1,079,856, excluding VAT for 2011. If we “unbundled”, and purchased only titles which were used at least 500 times in 2009, the list price would be €1,463,091, for titles used more than 200 times the annual cost would be €2,279,545.

This, however, does mean that our room for manoeuvre is more constrained. In the recent cancellation round by the College of Science and Engineering, all the cancellations were of journals not in bundles. We will continue to monitor and, in consultation with Colleges and Schools, remove items which we can and cancel which show low use.

Would it be better to unbundle our purchases and take less content to be able to unsubscribe from individual journal titles if need arose: unbundling with less content and more choice; or bundling with more content but less flexibility?

7. Support for learning and teaching

The support from the library materials budget for research and learning and teaching has not been differentiated. In a research-led environment, learners are exposed to a wide range of library resources. However, there are specific needs for learning, particularly around the ready availability at time of need through multiple copies and increasing through e-resources (e-reserve and e-books). Support for learning and teaching, including growing numbers in PG-T students and expanding distance education, is currently dependent on the availability of library funds in each School.

Some interesting work has been carried out at the University of Huddersfield. This has established a correlation between library use (access to e-resources, book loans and library visits) and final degree result. The study shows that there are significant differences amongst disciplines, but that, overall, those who achieved first class degrees made an average of 70 logins to Huddersfield’s resource discovery system and borrowed an average of 83 books; while those who achieved a 2.1 had 60 logins and 65 loans; those who achieved a 2.2 had 45 logins and 41 loans; and those who achieved a third had 30 logins and 27 loans.

Is the collection that is suitable for research also suitable for learning? Is our collection suitable for learning at all levels and for distance education? Are there particular actions we need to take to ensure that the collection policy is responding to current needs?

8. Longer term strategy: Open Access

The longer term solution to the costs of scholarly communication may lie with Open Access publishing. At the moment, about 10% of Edinburgh’s research outputs are likely to be available in Open Access repositories, both subject repositories such as ArXiv and Edinburgh Research Archive, although this is concentrated in some subject areas, where Open Access is the preferred and accepted

http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=414367&c=2
http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/7842/1/SCONUL_2010_white_stone.pdf
model. However, even in these subject areas, there is still a requirement from researchers, to purchase the journals in which the articles are published, possibly as a formal record of publication.

Subject repositories may be the appropriate route for longer term Open Access, with Institutional Repositories such as ERA important for areas without subject repositories, and to act as a preservation archive for all institutional research. It is certainly the case that researchers should only need to deposit in one archive.

Preparation for the REF focuses on research management. However, in parallel with this, we will continue to work to get as much of Edinburgh’s research, consistent with researcher wishes, available in Open Access sources, both in subject repositories and the institutional repository, in order to improve its visibility.

However, the longer term strategy is precisely that: it does not, at the moment, provide a quick fix for issues around expenditure on library materials. We are involved with JISC projects looking at the economic models for this longer term transformation of the scholarly communications environment.

*Does the Committee consider that Open Access is the appropriate longer term strategy? Why do researchers in areas with high Open Access content still wish us to purchase the journals?*

9. **The impact of the financial downturn on the external environment**

We know that many bodies which provide the framework within which we work are also facing financial difficulties. The British Library will have a 15% cut over 3 years. The National Library of Scotland faces a 75% cut in its purchasing grant, although will continue to receive legal deposit (British) material. This is potentially serious for some subject areas in the University who depend on the NLS for materials.

*What sort of impact could these reductions of NLS acquisitions have on University of Edinburgh members?*

10. **Benchmarking with Russell Group universities**

We regularly benchmark our collection against other universities. The first chart below shows the total expenditure in 2008-2009 by a select group of Russell Group institutions on information provision, using the definition from SCONUL, which includes the purchase of books, and journals both print and electronic, and the expenditure on inter-library loans. The second chart looks, at the expenditure on books and periodicals per FTE student, both UG and PG (chosen as a proxy for institution size).

*The Committee is invited to consider if Edinburgh is in the appropriate position in these charts?*
Sheila Cannell
Director of Library Services
December 2010