Library Committee

23rd June 2011

Agendum 5

Library Collaboration

**Brief description of the paper**

This paper describes collaborative activities which the Library engages in. These support the University’s strategic plan to build strategic partnerships and collaborations. The benefits of collaboration for UoE include:

- Sharing print resources through inter-library and joint retention arrangements
- Saving money through joint working and joint negotiation and procurement for digital resources and software
- Sharing knowledge and expertise
- Learning about what is successful in other libraries
- Providing leadership to other libraries
- Higher visibility

**Action requested**

Library Committee is invited to review and comment on these collaborative activities.

**Resource implications**

One reason for engaging in collaborative activities is to share resources. However, there can be high transaction costs in collaboration, and any collaborative activity has to be examined for its cost-benefit and added value. We now review all new collaboration rigorously before embarking on them.

**Risk Assessment**

Does the paper include a risk analysis? **No**

**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**

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Edinburgh University Library Committee

Library collaboration

Libraries have always been collaborative. For generations, it has been impossible for libraries to provide all the resources which their users have needed, and libraries have built collaborations to enhance the local service. This paper reports on ways in which the University of Edinburgh Library collaborates with others, and seeks the support of Library Committee as it continues to pursue these collaborative activities; and as we seek to increase collaborative activities in the light of technological advances and the current financial climate.

One of the University’s strategic themes in the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan is to build strategic partnerships and collaborations where these add value to the University of Edinburgh.

In the Library, the benefits of collaboration for UoE include:

- Sharing print resources through inter-library and joint retention arrangements
- Saving money through joint working and joint negotiation and procurement for digital resources and software
- Sharing knowledge and expertise
- Learning about what is successful in other libraries
- Providing leadership to other libraries
- Higher visibility

There can be high transaction costs in collaboration, and any collaborative activity has to be examined for its cost-benefit and added value. We now review all new collaboration rigorously before embarking on them.

Library Committee is invited to review and comment on these activities.

1. **Professional organisations.** We are members of many professional organisations which give shared experience and expertise, with access to colleagues facing the same issues as we do. Increasingly these organisations give platforms for shared procurement and negotiation with suppliers. They also provide specialised library staff development, not available through normal University channels.

   The most important professional organisations of which we are members are Research Libraries UK (Russell Group libraries), Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries, Standing Conference on National and University Libraries (all UK HE libraries), OCLC Research Libraries Group partnership (a US library intelligence gathering group), and other subject based library professional organisations.

2. **We have a long history of collaborative procurement of library content and collections,** through JISC Collections and, in Scotland through APUC and the SCURL procurement organisation SCOPNET. Often these provide a better price for content which is elective to purchase. More recently, and particularly within Scotland, we have been working towards shared procurement for all HEIs. For example, SCOPNET now negotiates a framework for periodical and monograph...
purchase which ensure a discount for everything we buy; and SHEDL (Scottish Higher Education Digital Library) has negotiated with publishers to provide the full content of some packages to all HEIs in Scotland.

3. A more recent development has been to collaborate in **negotiation to seek better pricing**—to instruct our procurement agents such as JISC Collections to negotiate hard on our behalf to reduce costs. The ASPI initiative, led by Research Libraries UK, is doing this for the major renegotiations with Elsevier and Wiley-Blackwell this year; and SHEDL is also instructing much tougher negotiation on its renegotiations this year.

4. There have been a number of **collaborative software procurements**. Dating back to 1999, the University of Edinburgh and the National Library of Scotland procured the Voyager library system together at a significant discount over separate procurement. Building on this, the Scottish Digital Library Consortium (SDLC), led by UoE and NLS, has offered Library Management Systems, repositories and resource discovery systems to 11 other organisations, mostly in HE. For almost all of this work, UoE is in a leadership position in Scotland. Much of this work has required development, and it has been synergistic to develop for SDLC clients in common with UoE requirements.

5. It is likely that the **future procurement of software** is likely to be of “cloud based” services. The new Resource Discovery systems are hosted in the cloud. It is likely that there will be substantial activity in this area over the next couple of years, and we will be exploring the cost benefits of managing this collaboratively, primarily with other Scottish HEIs.

6. **Access and borrowing** is a collaborative activity across the UK. We make our collections available to others, both physically and through the inter-library loan service; and others make their services available to us. These arrangements are controlled through a series of long-standing protocols. For example, the SCONUL Access Scheme is a set of reciprocal arrangements which allows some users access only, and other to borrow.

Recently, these protocols have been coming under pressure in two ways. The first is that the private universities which are being established, primarily in London, want to use the SCONUL protocols to establish universities with minimal libraries and to use the library services in other universities. At the moment this does not affect us in Edinburgh, but it may in the future.

The other challenge is around the increasing use of libraries, particularly during exam time. A few libraries withdrew access to students from other universities during the exam period this year. We did not, but monitored usage carefully over this period. We will be considering our position for next year in the light of what other libraries do, but would prefer to continue to provide access as we always have done.

7. There are a series of **collaborative arrangements about print collections**. These include the United Kingdom Research Reserve which is a collaborative distributed national research collection managed by a partnership between the Higher
Education sector and the British Library. It allows Higher Education libraries to de-duplicate their journal holdings of a title if two copies are held by other UKRR members, ensuring continued access to low-use journals, thus allowing libraries to release space to meet the changing needs of their users. To date we have submitted about 400 low use journals with equivalent electronic access to UKRR. We are also working closely with other major libraries in Scotland on a project to identify the unique monographs which each of these libraries holds—we must ensure that these are well cared for, and, if funds can be found, digitised.

8. **Funded projects.** We collaborate with many other universities and other organisations through projects which are funded by JISC, AHRC, European Union, Museums and Galleries Scotland and many other organisations. Collaborative projects can have a high staff cost to us, but can generate income which allows innovation and can deliver very significant benefits. We assess these very carefully to ensure that the benefit to our service outweighs the costs. Often these projects help us develop software, or digitise important content—activities which we cannot always meet from the core budget. These projects also help us build national and international relationships.

Sheila Cannell
June 2011