

Collaboration in research library provision: international comparisons

Background to the Study

1. The HEFCE and the British Library, in partnership with the HE funding bodies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the national libraries of Scotland and Wales, have jointly established a new Research Support Libraries Group with the terms of reference above. The Group is expected to produce a single report, in the summer of 2002, making proposals for a new national strategy to ensure that UK researchers in all disciplines continue to have access to world class information sources – that is, to all of the research materials, including materials in print and electronic form, that they need in order to produce work of national and international excellence. The Group is working to a 10 year strategic planning horizon.

2. As part of its preparatory work the Group will be consulting widely within the academic and library communities to establish what are considered to be the current and emerging future needs of UK researchers, and what provision will be required to meet these. The Group also wishes to undertake a programme of research to inform its work including studies into how researchers use libraries and mapping examples of collaborative activities within the UK and internationally. The present study will form a major element in that enquiry.

3. The Group takes as its starting point the observations that:

- a. providing all of the information resources required by UK researchers is now beyond the capacity of any single library;
- b. no individual HEI can maintain library and information resources meeting the needs of all of its researchers;
- c. we do not yet have in place adequate arrangements to ensure that researchers' needs are met through collaborative action;
- d. developments in IT offer a means of improving access but also the possibility of a further increase in the volume and complexity of information to be managed.

4. A key issue for the Group will be to identify achievable changes in the collection and management strategies of research libraries, individually and collectively, which would result in researchers having better access to more of the information sources that they need. In practice this will mean finding a balance, within available funding that may not increase significantly, between:

- a. ensuring that researchers have easy access to materials (especially regularly used materials) in ways which reasonably reflect their preferred way of working and using those materials;
- b. reducing duplication of holdings, especially of less used materials and of those that are also available online; and

- c. ensuring that the total distributed national collection contains more different items that researchers would wish to use than at present, and that they can gain reasonably easy access to these.

Purpose of the study

5. Against this background, the purpose of the study is to identify and describe any observable cases, in countries outside the UK, where research libraries are engaged in collaborative action in response to these issues. Cases where action has been considered or instituted, but is not now in place, would also be of interest for the lessons that may be learnt from them. The study would be used by the Group to inform its discussions and as a basis for deciding whether to enter into further dialogue with particular bodies involved in study cases.

Objectives

6. The study therefore aims to identify, describe and analyse sufficient cases of collaboration in research library provision to illuminate the full range of relevant international experience. The focus should be on identifying the range of available experience and the lessons to be learnt from this rather than the volume of activity. In the cases selected for analysis it should, as far as possible:

- a. Identify the events or pressures leading to collaboration.
- b. Identify and consider the stated aims and objectives of those instituting the collaboration and the services or materials to which it applied.
- c. Identify and consider the management arrangements put in place, and any effects these have on the outcome.
- d. Identify any costs incurred in setting up the collaboration.
- e. Assess - in quantitative terms as far as possible - the success and effectiveness of the collaboration, including in relation to the achievements of the participants working alone.
- f. Identify any transferable success criteria and to lessons to be learnt.

7. The study report should analyse and present the body of observed practice in the light of these questions and of the Group's overall approach set out above. It should identify well-documented cases of transferable good practice (and cases from which there are clear lessons to be learnt). It should also identify any cases of collaboration which appear particularly to merit further investigation in depth.

Scope and method

8. It will be important for those undertaking the study to determine the scope of their work, and to identify appropriate methods of enquiry, having regard to their knowledge of existing practice internationally as well as to the Group's frame of reference and our strategic

focus. This will be a desk-based study. It will involve a comprehensive review of the professional literature and it is expected that a range of key stakeholders will be contacted by telephone and email to elicit up to date information. We recognise that there may be interesting cases which are not as yet well documented: the aim is to summarise as far as possible what is known so that the Group may decide what further enquiry may be merited.

Timescale and outputs

9. The study should provide a progress report by 21 September for the group's discussion and a full final report, listing identified cases of possible interest and summarising what is known about each of these, by 19 November 2001. There may be opportunity to continue the study beyond these dates should the study require it.

Tender Requirements

10. The tender proposal should include
 - a. Names and full contact details of the consultants undertaking the work
 - b. Outline of intended method
 - c. A full timetable, including identifying key milestones
 - d. Total costs showing how these were made up, stating whether prices include VAT and/or expenses and with proposed phasing of payments relating to the key milestones (payments will be made through the BACS system upon the achievement of those milestones)
 - e. Evidence of recent relevant work undertaken.

Selection Criteria

11. The successful proposal will be selected after consideration of the following elements:
 - a. Understanding of the brief
 - b. Understanding of Higher Education
 - c. Capability to deal with requirements
 - d. Suitability and feasibility of proposed method
 - e. Timescale
 - f. Cost
12. The HEFCE is not bound to accept the lowest of any tender. It is the HEFCE's view that the services outlined in the invitation to tender should be deliverable within a total overall budget of between £10,000 and £15,000 including VAT.

Procedure for Selection

13. Please indicate your ability to meet the study's needs against all the sections listed above, highlighting any problem areas or possible improvements.
14. Tenderers should submit four hard copies of their proposal to Vanessa Conte at the HEFCE by midday on 6 August 2001. Proposals received after this deadline will not be accepted.
15. Short-listed candidates may be asked to make a presentation to the HEFCE, to further explain their service and how they can meet the requirements. The Council reserves the right to negotiate with one or more tenderers following the submission of the tender proposals.

Further Information

16. For further information, or to discuss any aspect of this specification, please contact:

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