

Peer Review Report

Library NUI Maynooth

2004

***NUIM LIBRARY QUALITY REVIEW***

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Assessors wish to acknowledge with thanks the support and cooperation they received in undertaking their review of the NUIM Library. They found the arrangements which were put in place by the Quality Unit to be most satisfactory.

In addition, the attitude of the Library staff during the course of the Review was positive, helpful and constructive.

The Assessors also wish to state that their involvement in this Review has been a professionally rewarding experience and that they have gained much personally from the process.

## **Introduction**

During the Peer Review visit, the Assessors met with almost every member of the Library staff, Library security staff, representatives of the undergraduate, postgraduate (taught and research) student community and a number of academic staff. In addition, the Self Assessment Report and appendices were reviewed and each demonstrates that the organisation of the Library and the wider NUIM academic community are based on clearly defined objectives underpinned by well considered policies relating to the employment of University personnel (e.g. in the areas of Equality, Dignity at Work, Safety, Disability and Freedom of Information).

The Assessors are pleased to report that the NUIM Library is an effective and efficient facility. The range of services provided is comparable with that offered by much larger academic libraries. The Library staff are clearly committed to their work, to the support of the NUIM academic community and to the further development of library services and facilities and without exception were positive about their employment in the University Library. In addition, it is apparent that the University community values its Library and the Assessors noted the widespread praise for the services it provides.

The Assessors have no major criticisms of the Library and the comments and recommendations made are for the purpose of further enhancing Library provision.

## 1. Library Strategic Plan

It is noted that the period covered by the existing Plan is now coming to an end. In the Self Assessment Report it is suggested that the Library is at an early stage in the development of a hybrid library. This has been defined in the following terms:

*The Hybrid Library is one where 'new' electronic information resources and 'traditional' hardcopy resources co-exist and are brought together in an integrated information service, accessed via electronic gateways available both on-site, like a traditional library, and remotely via the Internet or local computer networks. The hybrid library is different from a typical library web-site in two ways. One is the permanent and equal inclusion of print information sources alongside the electronic, a second is the attempt to focus and interpret the whole service-subject-specific and generic elements-for a particular group of users in a scaleable fashion. The philosophical assumption underlying the hybrid library is that libraries are about organised access, rather than local collections-which become just a part of the means of delivery. (Taken from Hylife documentation-an eLib Phase 3 Project.)*

Nevertheless there is no definitive view of what it should look like. An opportunity therefore presents itself for the Library to develop a new focus in the planning for a genuinely hybrid library in which information and communications technologies and traditional library practices are harnessed to provide more effective access to learning resources in support of teaching, learning and research.

The Library currently has a Sub Librarian vacancy and it is strongly recommended that this is filled, with the new appointee joining an enhanced and formally established senior management team and having a specific remit to develop a modern ICT based library service.

The Library Policy Committee will have a key role to play in this exercise and it is proposed that its working arrangements are reviewed to ensure that it is able to contribute effectively to the process.

In considering the future development of the Library building it is proposed that an option appraisal is undertaken. The existing library building is in the ownership of St Patrick's College which represents a possible risk for NUIM in the future. Options might include the following:

- a. The extension of the existing library
- b. The erection of a new building on the North Campus (reflecting changes in the focus of the University's development) and the reallocation of the existing library for other academic purposes.

The latter option would provide an opportunity for the Library to embrace completely the hybrid model and perhaps become an exemplar for the rest of the country.

The challenge in updating the Strategic Plan would be to justify, within the context of the hybrid library model, the purpose of, and space requirements for, an optimal library service; the role of the printed publication, the electronic infrastructure, the staff resources, functions and skill levels for such a facility (and particularly in the areas of ICT and information literacy), the contribution of the Russell Library, the role of Special Collections, its service provision for the outreach site at Kilkenny, book storage arrangements and disposal policies. A migration strategy from hard copy to electronic format for official publications should be explored. The position of Oscail students and other distance learners would also need to be considered within the development of the Strategic Plan.

It is proposed, therefore, that the Library commences this process involving all Library staff and with wide consultation across the University. It would be expected that customer satisfaction surveys, the development of benchmarking data, the utilisation of the wealth of information accumulated in the Library Survey of 2003 and the preparation of strategies for the regular evaluation of emerging technologies and ideas would be integral parts of this exercise.

It is particularly noted that the Library does not feature very strongly in the University Strategic Plan and it is recommended that the Library Strategic Plan both draws on and informs the institutional Strategic Plan. A dialogue with the University is required to establish the relationship between the library budget, university expansion (including the impact of the increased diversity of the student body) and research funding. A mechanism needs to be established whereby increased funding for research can be reflected in library funding to support research.

## **2. Information Resources Development**

The appointment of staff to subject librarian roles has been a significant step in the further development of services and collections which relate directly to the needs of faculty and students. A next step would be to extend the role of subject liaison librarians by preparing planned collection development policies which match more exactly the learning needs of the NUIM academic community. Discussions with both faculty and students indicates that there are occasions where there is a considerable mismatch between library provision and reader expectations. Indeed, owing to the inadequacies of collections, lecturers are now encouraging students to use the fee based Luminarium service.

The current arrangement whereby library materials budgets are allocated to academic departments without the existence of clearly defined collection development plans is not sustainable in the present financial climate and militates against the effective use of limited financial resources. It is strongly recommended that in the future the expenditure of library materials budgets only takes place if underpinned by the systematic compilation of tailored collection development plans (which build on the existing excellent, but generalised, Collection Development Plan) and which incorporate research, teaching and learning needs.

There is a shortage of undergraduate learning materials and there is evidence that students are not always being encouraged to buy books to support their own learning. More dialogue is therefore needed between the Library, faculty and students so that the role of the Library in supporting learning is made more explicit.

Virtual Learning Environments can provide the learning infrastructure needed to present learning materials more effectively to both undergraduates and taught postgraduates, and in the process achieve more of a balance between research and undergraduate needs. It is therefore recommended that this technology is evaluated so that the Library can make better use of it.

Currently some research material is presented on the open shelves in the John Paul 11 Library which might be better accommodated in a more secure space for example in one of the seminar rooms. There is potential for a student vacation project to be established to identify and relocate such material.

### 3. Library Space

The Library has severe space constraints. The building was designed to serve a population of 3,000 students and the space available is inadequate for the demands placed upon it. The creative use of space, for which the Library managers should be congratulated, means that it is now supporting a much larger and more diverse student population and as a study facility it has lasted well. It is clearly a successful social and study space providing quiet reading areas, group study facilities and more informal interactive areas. The accommodation available for Library services is well used but with further rationalisation could be improved and there are a number of areas which would benefit from a review of their operational effectiveness including the following:

- a) The circulation desk, which suffers from a shortage of reserve collection space. (In this connection, would it be appropriate for the location of less used materials to be returned to the open shelves, whilst retaining their restricted loan status?)
- b) The Library skills classroom for which it is recommended there is a modernisation programme to provide modern instructional facilities to promote the further development of information skills training and exploitation of the investment in electronic resources
- c) AV equipment areas which could be presented more effectively
- d) The service desk from which lap top computers are issued which needs to be further evaluated in ergonomic terms
- e) The self service system which is reportedly somewhat unreliable
- f) The public reading areas of the Library. In this connection good library provision involves offering a wide range of seating to accommodate differing needs. In the Library these range from social learning spaces to individual study spaces. It is suggested that the varied provision is further developed by the introduction of zoning in the Library – to provide silent areas, group learning areas, informal study and interactive spaces and single study spaces. It was particularly observed that students tended not to use large tables for quiet study – far preferring single study desks. If the Library is to be used optimally then there should be an increase in the number of single study desks. Zoning to support different modes of study would also permit an increase in personal computing spaces in the Library.
- g) The heating and ventilation system. The Library is too hot in summer and too cold in winter and a review of the heating and ventilation system is recommended for the benefit of both Library users and staff. Similar problems have been experienced in other libraries of the same age and these have been resolved by a variety of means including coating of glass to deflect sunlight, the ability to open more windows and the more active management of the heating and ventilation system.



#### **4. Library automation**

The Library maintains an impressive range of IT based systems and services. Its plan to introduce SFX/Metalib (a discovery and navigation tool providing linking services to fulltext material, abstracting, indexing and citation facilities, OPACs, its introduction of e-print servers and other library resources) is particularly to be commended. The development of an e-prints facility is also to be lauded.

IT developments can be a major drain on limited staff resources and it is recommended that an evaluation of the role of IT and the availability of staff resources be undertaken. This would particularly consider whether library technology is being used in the most appropriate and least time intensive way. For example current methods of providing remote access to library information resources may be more time consuming than is necessary. It would also be appropriate, prior to the implementation of significant changes in the IT infrastructure, to undertake project assessments also requiring appropriate consultation with Library staff. For example changing Aleph upgrades from the summer months to December may have an impact on the Library that could be ameliorated by the use of a project assessment process.

As academic libraries are increasingly facing a digital future it is recommended that consideration should be given to systems staff being given technician appointments to reflect their centrality to the development of the hybrid library.

That digital future could also be further enhanced by the development of a wider Systems Team to underpin the work of the Library's Systems section. A key role of that Team would be to coordinate the efforts of subject liaison librarians in the further development of the Library website, for which a content management system would need to be given active consideration. It is recommended that the library management system servers should be outsourced to the Computer Centre on a contractual basis to enable Library staff effort to be concentrated on managing the applications.

## **5. Personal Computer Provision**

Within NUIM there are approximately 260 PCs spread across 6 public access computer rooms. There are a further 700 machines situated in areas controlled by individual academic departments. The Library contains some 130 machines (including those for the sole use of library staff).

For Library machines, the Computer Centre sets up the desktop and full network support is given. There is regular liaison between the Computing Centre and the Library and a member of the Computing Staff has a particular responsibility for the provision of support to the Library. In addition, priority is given to faults logged by the Library.

Nevertheless, Library Systems staff do provide substantial support for personal computing facilities (including laptops) in the Library building also including computers used by Library staff. Whilst this has advantages in terms of the immediacy of the support given, the arrangement does restrict the delivery of the Library's considerable IT agenda. For example, the Library systems staff need to learn a variety of IT languages and database systems such as Oracle, Java and Pearl and SQL. If the Aleph library management system is to be more fully exploited, then staff resources for IT need to be redeployed. It is therefore proposed that consideration be given to the Computing Centre taking responsibility for Library PCs. It would be desirable if the basis for this could be a formal memorandum of agreement and that the spirit of the memorandum should be one of genuine partnership and not just that of service provider and customer. This might include a review of a standard desktop for both PC and laptops in the Library.

## **6. Information Desk Service**

There is clearly a substantial level of expertise available in the Library and reader enquiries are dealt with by staff at all levels. This does have advantages in that a wide range of staff feel they are contributing to the information support role of the Library. One draw back is that this provides for a lack of continuity in the provision of services. In order to deal with this discontinuity in service provision it is recommended that a formal process is established to make it clear to library staff about when to deal with enquiries and when to escalate them.

## **7. Inter Library Loans Service (ILL)**

In consequence of the increase in availability of electronic journals demand for inter library loans is diminishing and this has resulted in a reduction in staffing levels for the provision of this service. Nevertheless it remains a very important Library function which is greatly valued by its users. The Aleph library management system is used to administer aspects of the inter library loan service but it has some inadequacies – not least in the area of invoicing. This latter is a major task which needs to be simplified and it is recommended that the NUIM ILL process is benchmarked against the ILL processes followed by the other academic libraries using the Aleph system.

The recent changes in British Library inter library loan services, in which documents are delivered electronically to users, means that readers are often inconvenienced where they have been unable to print off the documents they have been sent. It is recommended that inter library loan procedures are reviewed and better arrangements are put in place, drawing on best practice elsewhere. One option which should be explored is that of the provision of a dedicated PC and printer located in the Inter Library Loans Department to overcome the inadequacies of the current electronic document delivery services.

## **8. Shelving Services**

The work of shelving books is undertaken by an enthusiastic and committed team of people who are very clear that they obtain considerable satisfaction from their work.

The objective of the shelving staff is to return books to the shelves within 24 hours. The Library is kept in a tidy state and the staff are to be praised for their efforts.

The Library management is to be commended on the emphasis they place on refreshing the manual handling skills of the Library staff. The work of the shelvers would be further improved if there were additional kikstools and light book trolleys and it is recommended that provision of these is renhanced. A review of the arrangements for the continuity of their employment and for the provision of backup in the event of staff shortages would also be desirable.

## **9. Russell Library**

The staff of the Library and those giving support from the University Library are to be commended most warmly on their dedication to the maintenance and development of the Library. The standards of professionalism are of the highest order. The Russell Library contains a collection of national importance which is clearly a source of institutional pride. Owing to the limited availability of financial resources its potential as a scholarly resource has never been fully exploited and it has less international recognition than is deserved; and yet it is a remarkably rich resource for both research and undergraduate study and for the underpinning of new academic programmes.

In order to provide a focus for the future development of the Library, it would be advantageous if a formal development plan were prepared on the basis of wide consultation across the University community – building on the principles already established in the existing Library Strategic Plan. Issues for particular consideration would include the following:

### **a) A Cataloguing Strategy**

The more rapid cataloguing of the collection in electronic formats will be essential if the Library is to be better utilised to support scholarship. The provision of a detailed catalogue record may mean that the task could not be completed in the foreseeable future. It is possible that the speed of the existing process—that of the commercial downloading of OCLC records and then adding local data—cannot be improved on. A possible second option, however, would be to use the short title approach adopted by Marsh's Library as an interim measure. It should be recognised, however, that in a professional context this latter would be an inadequate approach in the longer term. A possible third option to explore might be to adopt the model followed by the London School of Economics Library involving scanning of the card catalogue for access over the Internet.

It is recognised that this is a contentious matter as a high standard of scholarship in cataloguing is one of the marks of the professional librarian, and the Russell Library staff need to be supportive of any change in the cataloguing process. It is proposed, therefore, that an option appraisal is conducted involving Russell Library staff with a remit to produce a

strategy to enable the more rapid cataloguing of the collection. The cataloguing strategy should also contain an approach to the St Patrick's College Foundation for the purpose of preparing a fundraising effort to enable extra cataloguing staff to be employed.

- b) Funding arrangements and the administration of library finances**
- c) A review of staffing arrangements including the need for a specialist Archivist**
- d) A conservation assessment** (using the National Preservation Office software tool)
- e) Refurbishment of Library building**
- f) A cleaning strategy** (This would be for the purpose of building on the existing more ad hoc arrangements)
- g) A security review.** (In this connection it should be noted that staff can be on duty alone in the building. A "lone working protocol" would, therefore, be an essential element of the review. This would also have to take into account flexitime arrangements which could be more generous if the lone working protocol were to be properly implemented)
- h) A review of working arrangements.** Low temperatures in winter time will be unlikely to accord with the legal minimum
- i) The possible promotion of the collection by the reproduction of rare materials**

### ***Russell Library Conservation Laboratory***

The Conservation Laboratory clearly undertakes work of the highest conservation standard. Nevertheless, the location of the conservation laboratory in the middle of the Library is inappropriate. Not only does it detract from the wonderful architecture of the Library but the accommodation it offers for the work of the laboratory is most unsatisfactory. There is a lack of working space, washing, drying and storage facilities and it creates noise problems for readers. The solution is not difficult to find. There is adjacent accommodation, currently unused, and it is recommended that this could be readily converted into a conservation workshop which would both meet modern professional standards and provide a more productive working environment.

## 10. Student concerns

In meetings with student representatives, a number of concerns and suggestions were expressed viz

- a) Part time students indicated that they cannot always easily access library services.
- b) There was confusion about the levels of functionality of some computers- including those in the Copy Centre- (e.g. the inability in some cases to access email, hotmail and Word or to print Word documents), that in some cases they are unreliable, in many cases quite old and some appear to be poorly maintained. In this connection it was suggested that some of these matters could be resolved by explanatory notices indicating that certain machines had limited capabilities to ensure a balanced level of service provision.
- c) That whilst they accepted the need for a fining system for the misuse of mobile phones, they would like to see the establishment of phone zones. They also were disappointed that where a phone is inadvertently left on sanctions were not suspended for a first offence.
- d) The lack of facilities for students doing assignments which require the use of PCs.
- e) The inadequacy of opening hours for part-time students.
- f) The need for 24 hour study facilities in a section of the Library building.
- g) The lack of an adequate email service in the University
- h) The inadequacy of the class representative system which often does not work in terms of the availability of learning materials
- i) The inadequacy of facilities for postgraduate students on the Campus and the need for a zoned area in the Library for this category of user, also including locker facilities
- j) The need to reduce the numbers of computers dedicated to the Library catalogue, thus permitting an increase in personal computing provision



- k) The need for a more selective approach to the loaning of materials to postgraduate students and a more fair application of sanctions which take into account the complexities of balancing their private, academic and working lives with the needs of the Library's services.
- l) The need for more active promotion of the roles of subject librarians as providers of guidance and advice to the student community. In this regard it was considered that there was no consistency of approach by subject librarians in the delivery of support services and that it would be helpful if their roles were to be defined.
- m) The need for more photocopiers as the existing machines failed at frequent intervals
- n) The need for more self service equipment
- o) That whilst the Copy Centre was a well regarded service this was slightly marred by the inadequacy of its opening hours which did not match those of the rest of the Library service. This adversely affected part time and distance learning students particularly. It is strongly recommended that a review of the AV facilities/services is undertaken in the university for the purposes of centralising these facilities in one location.

It is suggested that a focus group of students is called to consider how library services may better relate to the needs of this sector of the academic community. This would build on the very praiseworthy user survey work which has done much to assist in the monitoring of library performance. It is further proposed that such an exercise is conducted every two years.

The Assessors were concerned to learn that international students are often badly affected by the Library not permitting them full facilities until their fees are paid. This damages their academic progress, undermines the mission of the University, is against the spirit of the Library service and loses a great deal of goodwill. It is strongly recommended that this practice changes immediately. Often payment is slow for bureaucratic reasons. There are far more effective ways of dealing with this matter e.g. issuing library cards for the first semester and then withholding facilities if fees are not paid or withholding transcripts and academic awards.

The Assessors noted that postgraduate and research students from time to time arrive in NUIM to undertake studies in subject areas for which there is no library information provision. This demonstrates the need for more dialogue between faculty and library subject specialists. In addition, it indicates that students perhaps should be better informed about the need to look beyond NUIM to obtain a picture of the information resources available to them on a national level for the support of their learning. The ALCID and SCONUL Research Extra schemes are particularly relevant to this issue.

The Library is to be commended for its formation of the Student User Group to ensure that student concerns are given particular consideration and the Deputy Librarian is to be particularly congratulated on her efforts in revitalising this body. It is recommended that the system of class representatives and subject liaison librarians could also be involved in re-establishing this as an effective User Group.

## 11. Staffing

The library staff are conscientious, committed and flexible and each makes a useful contribution to the Library's mission. It is very evident that they are enthusiastic about their work and that they are valued by the Library's senior managers. Indeed, the recently produced Library Staff Survey is evidence that the views of all Library staff, in terms of their working environment, are very much taken into account. In recent years the Library has undergone a period of rapid change and its staff are to be commended for their willingness to accommodate such change, to adapt to evolving technologies and to embrace new ideas for the purpose of making better use of limited staff resources. The most notable of these recently has been the use of outsourcing in the form of consolidated services for periodicals and shelf ready books for monograph materials. In this latter case it is recognised that the cataloguing and classification of book materials will be less tailored to the needs of NUIM than in the past and staff are to be congratulated on their realism in recognising that such an approach is inevitable as new demands are placed on libraries with static staff numbers.

The decision of the Library to assign a number of staff to subject liaison librarian roles is particularly to be commended. This development, which it is noted was widely welcomed by Library staff, is already encouraging a greater match between the needs of the academic community and the activities of the Library. Such change does, however, require staff responsibilities to be re-evaluated to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of work. Librarian staff can then focus on the further development of a subject liaison based approach to their work and devolve other responsibilities to senior library assistant and library assistant staff (an idea welcomed by a number of staff in these grades).

In order to ensure that the Library continues to meet the needs of the academic community with the limited staff resources available to it (and in the light of the frequently expressed view that many staff suffer from severe time constraints) and to promote efficiency gain, the following recommendations are made:

- the evaluation of the work responsibilities of each member of staff and the re-balancing of workloads where appropriate

- a review of job descriptions as part of the evaluation process (incorporating the responsibility for co-ordination and utilisation of user feedback; the exploitation of, and user instruction in, electronic resources; identifying and meeting the needs of the diverse student body and responding to developments in modularisation and semesterisation)
- the formalisation of work continuity and backup arrangements
- the grouping of subject liaison librarians into related subject teams for the purpose of providing mutual support with adjacent subject responsibilities
- an evaluation of the merits of merging Reader Services and Information functions in view of the considerable overlap in activity
- the preparation of a genuinely inclusive training needs analysis, which builds on the excellent Staff Development Policy, to provide a basis for the systematic training and up-skilling of all Library staff (particularly in IT and Web skills)
- the rationalisation of internal library meetings to ensure that they are all appropriate and effective and to investigate the possibility of merging some meeting functions
- the introduction of EDI into the acquisitions process thus reducing the bureaucracy involved in book ordering
- the extension of the role of the senior library assistant for legal deposit so that the cataloguing of this material can be part of the process

A significant number of library personnel are “contract” staff. A constant theme from contract staff employed in the Library is their feelings of insecurity about their continued employment. It is proposed that this matter is reviewed with the HR Department to see if reassurances about their ongoing employment can take place earlier in each academic cycle.

The rules relating to security of employment have changed under the auspices of new employment legislation emanating from the EU. There is, however, very limited knowledge about the matter amongst the library staff and it is recommended that briefing meetings are arranged to reassure staff about their new employment rights.

Certain staff also appeared to be somewhat unclear about the availability of job share arrangements and it is recommended that NUIM policies in this area are clarified

It is noted that a reward system for staff is in place in much of the University. The opportunities for the recognition of Library staff commitment, however, are limited. A number of staff are at the top of their salary scales and have

been so placed for a number of years. Other parts of the University do have available discretionary points on an incremental scale and it is recommended that the Library is treated in a similar way to the rest of the University. This would provide for equity of treatment and be a source of encouragement for loyal, committed and long serving staff in pursuit of the strategic development of the hybrid library.

A limited performance development review system is already in place in the Library and this represents good practice. Nevertheless, it is only available to contract staff in Reader Services. It is recommended that this arrangement is now extended to all staff and takes place on an annual basis.

## **12. Communication**

The Library staff on the whole believe that communication is good and wished to record their appreciation for the Librarian's openness of style and her accessibility to the staff.

The Library management makes commendable efforts to communicate with Library staff. Bulletin boards, daily diaries and meetings are significant features of internal communication. The managerial approach is inclusive and responsive and in consequence it is relatively easy to allocate responsibility for new developments and initiatives. Nevertheless there are gaps in this process and it is proposed that the current arrangements are turned into a formal communication cycle in which all areas of the Library both contribute to and are included in the communication system.

The Russell Library staff on occasion do appear to be overlooked and it is recommended that this matter be given particular consideration.

At a University level email is not used optimally and it is suggested that this matter is reviewed as an effective email service will promote better communication in the Library and between the Library and its users.

### **13. External links**

The University Library plays an active part in a number of Irish and international bodies and organisations and contributes significantly to national information initiatives. A particularly interesting development is IReL, the Irish Electronic Library which will provide high quality information resources for Science and Technology and perhaps in the future for the Humanities and Social Sciences. This is being coordinated by IRIS, the national interlending and information resources procurement agency for libraries. It is a body which is supported by subscription and all university libraries have membership except NUIM. This is disadvantageous to NUIM and it is suggested that membership of IRIS is negotiated as soon as possible.

### **14. External visitors**

Perhaps owing to space constraints the Library is not readily available to casual users, alumni and overseas students and there are restrictions on the usage of library services by part time staff. Whilst this is understandable in an operational sense it also damages the University's mission and it is strongly recommended that library policies in this area be reviewed.

## **15. Final remarks**

The Assessors wish to reaffirm that they are strongly of the view that the Library is an impressive facility which provides admirable levels of service to NUIM.

The foregoing comments are for the purpose of enhancing library provision and service. The Assessors have felt privileged to undertake this Review and have found many examples of good practice which will inform the further development of the library services for which they themselves are responsible.

The NUIM library service is in very good hands and the Assessors trust that their recommendations will make an excellent Library service an even more valuable learning resource to support the mission of the National University of Ireland Maynooth.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

*This is a list of the recommendations taken directly from the text of the report*

### 1. Library Strategic Plan

The Library currently has a Sub Librarian vacancy and it is strongly recommended that this is filled, with the new appointee joining an enhanced and formally established senior management team and having a specific remit to develop a new ICT based library service.

The Library Policy Committee will have a key role to play in this exercise and it is proposed that its working arrangements are reviewed to ensure that it is able to contribute effectively to the process.

In considering the future development of the Library building it is proposed that an option appraisal is undertaken.

It is proposed that the Library commences the process of developing a new strategic plan involving all library staff and wide consultation across the University. It would be expected that customer satisfaction surveys, the development of benchmarking data, the utilisation of the wealth of data accumulated in the Library Survey of 2003 and the development of strategies for the regular evaluation of emerging technologies and ideas would be integral parts of this exercise.

It is particularly noted that the Library does not feature very strongly in the University Strategic Plan and it is recommended that the Library Strategic Plan both draws on and informs the institutional Strategic Plan. A dialogue with the University is required to establish the relationship between the library budget, university expansion (including the impact of the increased diversity of the student body) and research funding. A mechanism needs to be established whereby increased funding for research can be reflected in library funding to support research.

## **2. Information Resources Development**

There is need for more liaison between faculty and the Library. A next step would be to extend the role of subject librarians by preparing more planned collection development policies which match more exactly the research learning information needs of the NUIM academic community.

It is strongly recommended that in the future the expenditure of library materials budgets only takes place if underpinned by the systematic compilation of collection development plans.

More dialogue is needed between the Library, Faculty and students so that the role of the Library in supporting learning is made more explicit.

It is recommended that Virtual Learning Environment technology is evaluated so that the Library can make better use of it to present learning materials more effectively to both undergraduates and taught postgraduates. In this way the digital library can be linked more directly to the curriculum.

Currently some research material is presented on the open shelves in the John Paul 11 Library which might be better accommodated in a more secure space for example in one of the seminar rooms. There is potential for a student vacation project to be established to identify and relocate such material.

### **3. Library Space**

A number of areas would benefit from a review of their operational effectiveness including the following:

- h) The circulation desk which suffers from a shortage of reserve collection space.
- i) The Library skills classroom for which it is recommended there is a modernisation programme to provide modern instructional facilities to promote the further development of information skills training and exploitation of the investment in electronic resources
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- k) The service desk from which lap top computers are issued which needs to be further evaluated in ergonomic terms
- l) The self service system which is reportedly somewhat unreliable
- m) The public reading areas of the Library.
- n) The heating and ventilation system.

### **4. Library Automation**

It would be appropriate, prior to the implementation of significant changes in the IT infrastructure, to undertake project assessments also requiring appropriate consultation with Library staff.

As academic libraries are increasingly facing a digital future it is recommended that consideration should be given to systems staff being given technician appointments.

That digital future could also be further enhanced by the development of a wider Systems Team to underpin the work of the Library's Systems section. A key role of that Team would be to coordinate the efforts of subject liaison librarians in the further development of the Library website, for which a content management system would need to be given active consideration.

It is recommended that the library management systems servers should be outsourced to the Computer Centre on a contractual basis to enable Library staff effort to be concentrated on managing the applications.

## **5. Personal Computer Provision**

Library IT staff resources need to be re-deployed. It is proposed that consideration be given to the Computing Centre taking responsibility for library PCs. It would be desirable if the basis for this could be a formal memorandum of agreement and that the spirit of the memorandum should be one of genuine partnership and not just that of service provider and customer. This might include a review of a standard desktop for both PC and laptops in the Library.

## **6. Information Desk Service**

In order to deal with this discontinuity in service provision it is recommended that a formal process is established to make it clear to library staff about when to deal with enquiries and when to escalate them.

## **7. Inter Library Loans Service**

It is recommended that the NUIM ILL process is benchmarked against the ILL processes followed by the other academic libraries using the Aleph system.

Resulting from the recent changes to the British Library loan services, it is recommended that inter library loan procedures are reviewed and better arrangements are put in place, drawing on best practice elsewhere.

## **8. Shelving Services**

A review of the arrangements for the continuity of their employment and for the provision of backup in the event of staff shortages would also be desirable. It is recommended that provision of equipment for these staff is reviewed.

## 9. Russell Library

In order to provide a focus for the future development of the Library, it would be advantageous if a formal development plan were prepared on the basis of wide consultation across the University community.

It is proposed, therefore, that an option appraisal is conducted involving Russell Library staff with a remit to produce a strategy to enable the more rapid cataloguing of the collection.

Issues for particular consideration would include the following:

- Cataloguing Strategy. The cataloguing strategy should also contain an approach to the St Patrick's College Foundation for the purpose of preparing a fundraising effort to enable extra cataloguing staff to be employed.
- Funding arrangements and the administration of library finances
- A review of staffing arrangements including the need for a specialist Archivist
- A conservation assessment (using the National Preservation Office software tool)
- Refurbishment of Library building
- A cleaning strategy
- A security review (including a "lone working protocol")
- A review of working arrangements
- The possible promotion of the collection by the reproduction of rare materials

### ***Russell Library Conservation Laboratory***

More appropriate accommodation is needed for this facility. It is recommended that adjacent accommodation (to the Russell Library), currently unused, could be readily converted into a conservation workshop which would both meet modern professional standards and provide a more productive working environment.

## **10. Student Concerns**

It is suggested that a focus group of students is called to consider how library services may better relate to the needs of this sector of the academic community. This would build on the very praiseworthy user survey work (ensuring the monitoring of library performance) which could now be undertaken once every two years.

It is strongly recommended that a review of the AV facilities/services is undertaken in the university for the purposes of centralising these facilities in one location.

The Assessors were concerned to learn that international students are often adversely affected by the Library not permitting them full facilities until their fees are paid. This damages their academic progress, undermines the mission of the University, is against the spirit of the Library service and loses a great deal of goodwill. It is strongly recommended that this practice changes immediately.

The Assessors noted that postgraduate and research students from time to time arrive in NUIM to undertake studies in subject areas for which there is no library information provision. This demonstrates the need for more dialogue between faculty and library subject specialists. In addition, it indicates that students perhaps should be better informed about the need to look beyond NUIM to obtain a picture of the information resources available to them on a national level for the support of their learning. The ALCID and SCONUL Research Extra schemes are particularly relevant to this issue.

## 11. Staffing

In order to ensure that the Library continues to meet the needs of the academic community with the limited staff resources available to it and to promote efficiency gain, the following recommendations are made:

- the evaluation of the work responsibilities of each member of staff and the re-balancing of workloads where appropriate
- a review of job descriptions as part of the evaluation process (incorporating the responsibility for co-ordination and utilisation of user feedback; the exploitation of, and user instruction in, electronic resources; identifying and meeting the needs of the diverse student body and responding to developments in modularisation and semesterisation)
- the formalisation of work continuity and backup arrangements
- the grouping of subject liaison librarians into related subject teams for the purpose of providing mutual support with adjacent subject responsibilities
- an evaluation of the merits of merging Reader Services and Information functions in view of the considerable overlap in activity
- the preparation of a genuinely inclusive training needs analysis, which builds on the excellent Staff Development Policy to provide a basis for the systematic training and up-skilling of library staff (particularly in IT and web skills)
- the rationalisation of internal library meetings to ensure that they are all appropriate and effective and to investigate the possibility of merging some meeting functions
- the introduction of EDI into the acquisitions process thus reducing the bureaucracy involved in book ordering
- the extension of the role of the senior library assistant for legal deposit so that the cataloguing of this material can be part of the process

A significant number of library personnel are “contract” staff. A constant theme from the contract staff employed in the Library is their feelings of insecurity about their continued employment. It is proposed that this matter is reviewed with the HR Department to see if reassurance about their ongoing employment can take place earlier in each academic cycle.

The rules relating to security of employment have changed under the auspices of new employment legislation emanating from the EU. There is, however, very limited knowledge about the matter amongst the library staff and it is recommended that briefing meetings are arranged to reassure staff about their new employment rights.

Certain staff also appeared to be somewhat unclear about the availability of job share arrangements and it is recommended that NUIM policies in this area are clarified.

A number of staff are at the top of their salary scales and have been so placed for a number of years. Other parts of the university do have available discretionary points on an incremental scale and it is recommended that the Library is treated in a similar way to the rest of the university.

## **12. Communication**

It is proposed that the current arrangements are turned into a formal communication cycle in which all areas of the Library both contribute to and are included in the communication system. In this connection it would provide an opportunity for the Library to review the effectiveness of its current meeting arrangements and to remove any unnecessary duplication of effort.

The Russell Library staff on occasion do appear to be overlooked and it is recommended that this matter be given particular consideration.

At a University level email is not used optimally and it is suggested that this matter is reviewed as an effective email service will promote better communication in the Library and between the Library and its users.

## **13. External Links**

It is suggested that membership of IRIS, the national interlending and information resources procurement agency for libraries is negotiated as soon as possible.

## **14. External Visitors**

It is strongly recommended that library policies in this area be reviewed.



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