



THE LIBRARY
An Leabharlann,

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad

Quality Improvement Plan

September 2015

The Library's response to the recommendations of the Peer Review Group Report

1. **Sustainability and scalability** of the current range of services is a risk to the Library's continuing success. The Library offers an excellent portfolio of services across a huge and impressive range, and during long periods of opening. However, we have a concern that the 42.25 FTE staff are already operating close to full capacity, and are spread too thinly in some key areas. This leaves services vulnerable to absence, hard to sustain for long periods, and impossible to scale beyond existing levels as take up increases through increased student numbers, or raised levels of awareness among existing customers. In addition, it reduces the flexibility of the Library in its ability to respond to new initiatives, such as those emerging from the Curriculum Initiative. In the short period of our visit, we identified some obvious potential points of failure, such as research, IT, and administrative support, but it is likely that more would emerge on closer examination. We recommend that the University gives serious consideration to the level of resourcing in some areas of Library activity, paying particular attention to its own strategic priorities and the support of new skills needed for the Library's further development.

Response:

The Library endorses this recommendation and the Librarian is in the process of preparing a report for University Executive (UE) on staffing needs for the mid to long term. This report highlights the Library's success at doing more with less but identifies a number of key posts that will be necessary for the library to serve the University's growing needs. As part of strategic plan 2015-17 the library will undertake a skills audit of staff to inform our ongoing staff development programme so that, where possible, existing staff have, or develop, the appropriate skills.

2. **Increased focus.** We also encourage the senior staff of the Library to increase the selectivity applied to what the Library chooses to engage in going forward. While the current energy and enthusiasm is to be acknowledged and celebrated, a tighter focus for staff on what is most important to the University would be highly beneficial, especially in the current funding environment, but also as a discipline for good planning. We recommend that the opportunity of a new Strategic Plan is used to identify where this focus should be and in which order of priority these needs should be addressed. A two year, interim, strategic plan will help to identify the changes necessary following the University's Curriculum Implementation Project, from this Quality Review, and also realign the Library's planning cycle with that of the University's next Plan.

Response:

The Library is in the process of preparing a new strategic plan 2015-17 which will ensure that we continue to plan for and support university priorities. To date, the Library has been involved in preparations for the new curriculum in a way that is effective and sustainable. In recent years the Library has taken steps to focus and maximise resources including increased use of shelf ready books, outsourcing of bulk digitisation and the discontinuation of some services. However, it must be acknowledged that the Library is servicing an increasingly diverse user body across a growing range of disciplines. Furthermore, the expectations of this body are constantly rising. In this context it is difficult to significantly narrow our services. Indeed, there are some services which we are not currently providing or which we are providing at a low level which we will need to address in the short to medium term. Therefore, in addition to using our strategic planning process to review the breadth and depth of our focus, we will also use it to explore new methods of service delivery to enable us to continue to develop services within resourcing constraints and recognising staff's finite capacity.

3. **Collection Development.** The Library's current approach to Collection Development is a particular concern. While undergraduate students seem fairly well-catered for in terms of their reading material (particularly textbooks), research collections have developed idiosyncratically over many years in a number of discipline areas. The reasons for this appear to be two-fold: low levels of funding for purchase of library materials, and the almost total dependence on academic staff for their selection. We recommend a thorough review of the Library's approach to materials acquisition. As a minimum, we suggest a more balanced approach is adopted with the Library working more collaboratively with its University partners in teaching and research, both to fill obvious gaps in current holdings, and as a way to ensure that, in the future, the Library gives appropriate attention to disciplinary depth. We also suggest that thought is given to the entire notion of Collection Development in a digital age. What does a Library need to *own*, just in case it is one day needed, in an age when fast delivery is possible, via a third party supplier or partner, *just in time*? And will the concept of Collection Management still have meaning in light of technological developments in the future?

Response:

The Library is in the process of preparing a new collection development policy, a draft of which will be circulated to all stakeholders on campus for feedback. In addition it is hoped to initiate a new patron drive acquisition programme in the autumn which will give the student a greater role in collection selection. Furthermore, in conjunction with the collection development policy planning, the Library has also engaged with the three Faculty Deans to begin planning a critical thematic review of the collections. Subject librarians will liaise with academic staff and contribute to the acquisition of material. These initiatives will require suitable and proportionate resourcing.

4. **The Subject Librarian role.** The PRG wishes to endorse the recommendation previously made, in the 2010 Library Review Report, in calling for an urgent review of the role of subject librarian. While we acknowledge the value attached, particularly by academic staff, to a single point of contact with the Library, we also wish to challenge the possibility that those occupying these roles can, for the most part, operate as subject experts. The staff numbers are too small for this, with each person trying to cover a broad subject/discipline range. In addition, expectations are increasing all the time that the Library will need to align itself with the priorities identified in the University's curriculum review, in addition to the continual demand for service innovation. It is hard to imagine how all of this can be achieved without a fundamental review of the subject librarian role. We believe the recent appointment to the role of Senior Librarian for Learning & Research Information Services makes this review all the more timely.

Response:

The Library fully endorses this point and recognises the need for the role of the Subject Librarian to evolve. Significant work has already taken place to review the role of the Subject Librarian and understand how it has developed in a national and international context. This has included identifying the changing and emerging functions of subject librarians and reviewing subject allocation. Planned changes include an increased emphasis on liaison, advocacy and relationship building; the development of research support beyond the

research support librarian; a focus on the delivery of information literacy skills, more consistent input to collection development and an emphasis on developing online supports.

5. **Summon as a search tool.** Attention should be given to understanding negative feedback/usability in relation to Summon and improving ease of access to the 'old' library catalogue search facility.

Response:

The Library is in the process of collating and analysing feedback from users alongside metrics for use of Summon to target key areas of concern. The negative feedback which the PRG notes is at odds with the majority of the feedback which the library has received. Notwithstanding this, several initiatives such as roadshows and 'feedback cafes' will be conducted and the Library will consider findings with a view to meeting its users' needs. In addition to this the route to the traditional catalogue interface will be simplified.

6. **Event management.** While the development of the Library as a cultural hub and events venue is valued widely across the University (including within the Library) and the performance of the Library in this seen as exemplary, the PRG believes that this level of event involvement is unsustainable. This new responsibility draws on already scarce resources, and equally does not play to the Library's core strengths or *raison d'être*. We recommend, therefore, that the exhibitions and events hosted by the Library are reviewed with a view to developing a policy that reduces Library involvement to key strategic events and that the appropriate departments of the University (Communications, Alumni Office, Campus & Commercial Services, etc.) work together with the Library to review the current arrangements for event management and to agree a limited schedule of events to be hosted annually, with priority for high profile University/strategic events and events that play to the Library's core strengths.

Response:

Following the PRG report, the processes for events management have been reviewed. This has resulted in the creation of clearer policies and procedures. Furthermore, events coordination has now been assigned to one member of staff within the Library Information Services (LIS) department. The Library will review attendance level and impact of events during the coming year in the context of the upcoming Strategic Plan. The Library's role as 'cultural hub' and 'civic space' is of key significance to both University and Local communities and the recognition of our role in this regard by our colleagues is welcome.

7. **Library funding.** The Library budget has been historically defined, with no dedicated funding, or process for signing off for new programmes, or new areas of strategic priority. We recommend that a review of the model used by the University to determine the allocation of funding to the Library is conducted and note that this is overdue. In particular, the salaries and collections budgets need protection from any further erosion for the University to be able to compete with its peers in library terms. The Academic Programmes Committee might consider library resources and funding required when deliberating on new programmes.

Response:

The Library fully endorses this point. Two key issues have led to this issue becoming so difficult. Firstly, in 2008 the University ceased funding the library on an FTE basis and, therefore, the funding per user has declined steadily over the last 7 years to a point where the Library is funded at c.40% less than the sectoral average. Secondly, during the same period the discipline mix of the university changed and expanded far beyond the areas for

which the library, and therefore our budget, traditionally catered. The situation is particularly challenging in two areas: electronic resource provision and meeting the needs of cross-disciplinary programmes. A review to address the above concerns is necessary.

8. **Work Force planning.** In view of 7 above, we recommend that the Library take a structured, professional approach to planning its workforce, identifying the issues it faces in modernizing for future need. This will include, as a minimum, close examination of the current staff profile, known skills gaps, anticipation of roles needed in the next five years or so, with an accompanying action plan for how to address the current issues.

Response:

Consideration of staff profile and skills audit will be a key element of the resourcing review prepared for UE and the current strategic planning process.

9. **Capital projects.** The PRG recognises the significant investment made in the Library estate in recent years. Looking ahead, we recommend that future investment will need to be directed at:

- (a) redevelopment of original parts of the John Paul II Library
- (b) refurbishment of Russell Library
- (c) improvements to the Kildare store so that it can be fit for purpose for increased stock relegation
- (d) continuous up-keep of the new part of the John Paul II Library.

Response:

The Library supports the recommendation and notes the unprecedented and growing level of usage of the JP II building, coupled with a considerable increase in usage of the Russell Library. This level of success, while encouraging places a strain on building infrastructure which needs to be addressed. The Library will address this in our strategic plan and looks forward to working with the University to achieve the goals and objectives identified.

10. **Quick wins.** In addition to the substantive recommendations made above, the PRG believes that a significant difference can be made to improve the experience of Library users through a series of 'Quick wins', as follows:

- Improved signage and classification guides on each floor would be of considerable benefit and address feedback from students and researchers about the difficulties they experience when trying to locate books on shelves.

Response:

The Library acknowledges this issue. While signage was deliberately minimal in anticipation of further refurbishment work taking place in summer 2015 this has now been postponed until summer 2016. The library will address this issue on an interim basis through the use of additional temporary signage and the removal of older signage.

- Current policy with regard to the usage of the post-graduate room should be reviewed and usage prioritised to support the goals of the Strategic Plan. The purpose of the room should be clearly articulated; is it a quiet space or 'home base' for research students; is it a dedicated meeting and study space for all postgraduates etc. This is a hugely emotive issue, exacerbated by a lack of a 'home' base for some PhD students. In these cases, the post-graduate room in the Library *is* their home for study purposes and there are issues

relating to noise, and the use of the space by some as a group study area. The space cannot be all things to all students; the best use of the space might be negotiated via the Graduate Studies Office and the Postgraduate Research Council.

Response:

The need for a dedicated postgraduate area was a longstanding library issue and was addressed in extension. It should be noted that, in its original configuration (research postgraduates only) usage was quite low. Based on this, a comprehensive review was carried out in conjunction with the Graduate Studies Office. Following feedback from Graduate Studies, the Postgraduate Research Council and the Student Library Committee the Room is now available to all postgraduates. The Library will continue to work with the relevant stakeholders to monitor the use of this space and to identify the optimum approach to its operation.

- The absence of a facility to leave books overnight is a source of extreme frustration, to post-graduates in particular, in that the (non-loan) books they are using must be returned to their shelf location at the end of each day. This issue is exacerbated by the length of time it can sometimes take for books to be re-shelved by staff in that they will likely not be available first thing the following morning.

Response:

It is necessary to balance equality of access to collections with individual needs. Non-loan books have such a designation due to their nature and demand and the need to ensure access to all. Library books are re-shelved in the course of each morning and any member of the library shelving team will happily assist in retrieving a specific item. This issue did not previously arise via any of the Library's many feedback mechanisms. However, the library will explore this issue further to better understand it and to develop an appropriate solution(s).

- Improved provision of lockers in the post-graduate room, and clarification as to who can use them would be welcome.

Response:

There are currently no lockers in the post-graduate room. The Library will explore this, in conjunction with the graduate studies office and campus security.

- A review of opening hours, based on need, at evenings, weekends and vacations is called for. This should include the opening hours of Special Collections more generally.

Response:

A survey of more than 1200 users in 2013 found that opening hours were, for the first time, not a concern. This was following a concerted effort by the University and the Library to increase opening hours. General opening hours have been extended by 20% during the summer, 26% during semester and a 46% increase during exam periods since 2012 and the Library will continue to monitor demand in this regard. Special collections opening hours are more limited than the library's general opening hours. This is a new service which is being delivered without any increase in staff resources. Notwithstanding this the library will review the opening hours of special collections.

- A review of the one day loan category would be welcomed by many students who seem to regard it as too short to enable books to be taken off campus.

Response:

The Library will review metrics regarding the use of all short term loan periods in the library and make recommendations accordingly.

- It seems that demand is considerable, and there is a willingness on the part of the Library to install a suite of Apple Macs, but this has been delayed for reasons beyond the control of the Library. The need for Macs and support for users should be considered within the context of an overall Library IT Strategy.

Response:

The Library wholeheartedly supports this point and the new library was to see the first public access Macs on campus. The delivery of these has posed a number of challenges for IT Services who are continuing to work to address these with a view to making the machines available as soon as possible.

- A policy is needed to enable the Library to deal with the serious issue of students locking computers and then leaving their desks for long periods, preventing others from using these.

Response:

The Library is in discussions with IT Services on this issue and looks forward to a resolution which will assist our users in this regard.

- The cycle for replacement of laptops needs to be reviewed within the context of a Library IT Strategy.

Response:

The Library acknowledges this issue which is largely due to funding constraints. This issue has been prioritised and 24 new laptops and new laptop lending technology will be deployed in the Library in autumn 2015.

- Leaders on social media should be identified among Library staff and appropriate support put in place to capitalise on advances in this area.

Response:

The Library welcomes this recommendation and will continue to review the membership of the Library Web Team with a view to harnessing staff talent in web and social media. Library management supported considerable training in this area and will continue to do so in the context of the upcoming strategic plan and skills audit

- The reporting line of the Facilities Team would benefit from reconsideration.

Response:

The Library fully endorses this recommendation and has moved the facilities function out of Learning, Teaching and Research Development (LTRD) to the Library Information Services (LIS) department. The role of the SLA LTRD has moved to LIS as SLA for Facilities and Events. Furthermore, all front line staff are now located in one department

reporting to the Assistant Librarian with responsibility for LIS, aiding a more 'joined up' approach to desk services.

- An integrated approach to front desk support should be taken, with all staff here working to the same service standards, so as to provide excellent service to students with regard to queries on Library, IT services and general University support.

Response:

This is an area of concern to the Library and we will be working with IT Services to address this issue.