

# **SOCIETY OF COLLEGE NATIONAL & UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES**

## **Working Group on Performance Improvement**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11 May 2006**

**Present:** Chris West (Chair), Toby Bainton, Angela Conyers, Susan Copeland, Claire Creaser, Philip Payne, Stephen Town, Jean Yeoh

**Apologies:** Maxine Melling, Rupert Wood

#### **1. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2006 were accepted as a correct record.

#### **2. Matters arising from the Minutes**

- a. It was agreed to take up the topic of the web when SCONUL's new site had been launched
- b. Stephen's liaison with the Working Group on Information Literacy had been delayed because he had been unable to attend their last meeting  
*Action: ST*
- c. Philip reported that a feature giving publicity to the impact measurement projects would appear in a forthcoming issue of *CILIP Update*
- d. Chris would investigate the Customer Value Discovery methodology when representatives of the company are next in the Swansea area and can visit him.  
*Action: CW*

#### **3. Progress on the VAMP project**

Stephen reported that the Executive Board had agreed the project plan and cost outline. The project subgroup had met on 15 March in Liverpool, where they received and accepted proposals for the first three work packages in Phase 1 from LISU and EvidenceBase.

Claire reported on the survey stage of the work: LISU had had 38 responses from a good cross-section of libraries. Two-thirds reported that they were already engaged in assessing their own value and impact; 25 were happy to be interviewed; and of these a good cross-section of 10 were actually interviewed. Interestingly the interviews revealed that some libraries who reported no value and impact activity were apparently doing at least some work on the topic.

Angela had been reviewing what libraries have been achieving with regard to the assessing value and impact since the publication of *The effective academic library* and had examined what SCONUL currently offers in the field. She had identified several projects that had produced toolkits, but had found little published about their use. She had also looked at ARL and CAUL to see what manuals and guidelines they had

produced. A synthesis of Claire's and Angela's work seemed likely to produce useful results.

The Group's thanks to Stephen and the subgroup were recorded. Progress had been good and interesting issues raised.

It was agreed to support the subgroup's proposal to seek an outside expert opinion on the first phase. This would provide helpful validation of the work. Toby would enquire of SCONUL's officers about the best means to seek additional funding of some £1500 to pay for about two days' consultancy. *Action: TB*

An e-mail (probably drafted by Stephen and signed by Maxine) would be sent to all SCONUL members, shortly before SCONUL's conference in June, asking them to come prepared to contribute to the VAMP workshops there or to feed their contribution to the group if they were unable to attend. *Action: CW, ST*

#### **4. e-Inform benchmarking options**

The group was joined for this agenda item by Sue Whittaker and Valda Smits of *e-Inform*. Sue and Valda said they had 16 subscribers to *e-Inform* which was a customisable package and not specific to libraries. They were keen to introduce tracking and benchmarking but had noted that their customers varied in their understanding of benchmarking and in their enthusiasm for it.

Stephen pointed out various features of LibQUAL: its ethical standpoint (users agree not to use their results to damage another party); its system of validation to demonstrate that the questions are measuring what participants intend to be measuring; the standardisation of demographics, so that groups giving opinions are always like-for-like; likewise the standardised time-frames, surveys all conducted at comparable times; and rigorous sample sizes for all user groups surveyed.

It was recommended that if SCONUL's standard template were used for the purposes of *e-Inform*, only strictly irrelevant questions should be omitted by institutions and no change should be permitted to the order of the questions. This should achieve useful standardisation.

#### **5. Publisher deals project**

Angela reported that she had produced a manual for participating institutions. This had taken some time but subsequent manuals (for other publishers) would be easier. Six publisher deals would be examined (Blackwell, Project MUSE, Elsevier, Wiley, Emerald, American Chemical Society). *SCONUL Focus* would report the results. *Action: AC*

#### **6. LibQUAL+ 2006 survey**

Stephen reported that this year the training had gone well, with exchange of views between SCONUL members and NHS libraries and the European Business School. The venue at the University of Westminster had been excellent. It was proving difficult to organise the results meeting in July. With 22 representatives the cohort represented the best level of participation so far. Some suggestions (in a paper) from the scheme administrator, Selena Lock, were favourably received by the Group. It was agreed that

there was ample scope for a one-day conference, with VAMP as the lead item but with other WGPI outputs (including Publisher Deals, user surveys and impact measurement) also highlighted. This could perhaps be achieved as a major ingredient in SCONUL's June Conference in 2007 or alternatively as a standalone conference in collaboration with UC&R or LIRG.  
*Action: TB (To discuss with Executive Board)*

## **7. SCONUL Statistical Return 2004-05**

The return had gone reasonably well – provided the three promised returns were submitted the participation rate would reach the usual 83-84%. Higher education colleges etc. (non-university institutions) were a concern since their participation was dwindling. Toby would try, perhaps with the help of a 'champion' from amongst their number, to increase their response.  
*Action: TB*

It was noted that the Higher Education Statistics Agency would no longer include in their 'student FTE numbers' any students following non-credit bearing courses. This would affect the ratios where student FTE numbers are the divisor. For most libraries the difference would be small: in the ten cases where it was most significant Claire would put a note in our published statistics to explain the discrepancy from previous years.  
*Action: CC*

No issues required discussion in relation to the questionnaire itself since a subgroup would deal with detailed matters after the end of the meeting.

## **8. Benchmarking with the SCONUL standard user survey**

The Group supported Claire's proposal to offer a fee-paid benchmarking service again this year provided that a viable group of the libraries were interested. The Group would send out a message encouraging take-up.

## **9. Date of next meeting**

To be decided by e-mail. [later decided as 7 September 2006 at 12.00 (lunch) for 12.30 (start) at the SCONUL office].

Minutes this time by Toby Bainton.