

story' of how services impact on individuals (the personal dimension) can be the most convincing way of demonstrating that we are making a difference.

Difficulty of measuring impact. Assessing impact is not easy and it is not an exact science. We are dealing with a changing environment where people, services, and needs are constantly evolving. Any research will inevitably provide a snapshot of what is happening at a particular point in time. It is very difficult to prove that the actions taken by library management have led to improvements in learning, teaching, and research. This is particularly the case as we deal with the extent of integration between our resources/ services and learning, teaching, and research. As we achieve more integration, it is going to be intrinsically more difficult to identify our specific contribution to students' learning or to the research of a member of staff.

In summary, the seminar was a stimulating and enjoyable day. However, it is clear that academic libraries still have some considerable way to go before impact measurement does become an integral part of the quality improvement agenda.

REFERENCE

Hart, L. 'Comparing ourselves: using benchmarking techniques to measure performance amongst academic libraries: report of the LIRG seminar, the effective academic library held in June 2001', *Library and information research news*, 25 (80), Autumn 2001, pp 23-34

News from SCONUL

WHAT DOES SCONUL DO?

This might sound like a strange question -especially for the *SCONUL Newsletter* to be posing- but it is a pertinent one.

One of the problems with librarians (and the organisations that support librarians!) is that we do not always get the message across of the brilliant job that we are actually doing.

So what is SCONUL doing at the moment? This new section of the *SCONUL Newsletter* aims to give readers a flavour of our current activities: conferences, staff development initiatives and statistical support ...not to mention the Secretary's late night lobbying of MEPs.

So what does SCONUL do? Read on!

Antony Brewerton
SCONUL Newsletter Editorial Team

Supporting off-campus learning and ensuring service quality

SCONUL Autumn Conference, Tuesday 20 November 2001, British Library: the Conference Centre

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This year's SCONUL Autumn conference focused on electronic delivery and the service quality aspect of supporting off-campus learning. The papers are summarised individually here, but the presentations are also available online at <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/Conference/presegm01/index.htm>

VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, BY SUE ROBERTS, HEAD OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES, EDGE HILL

Sue Roberts set the scene for the day by looking at Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). She distin-