

SCONUL Focus is the journal of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries.

SCONUL Focus aims to bring together articles, reports and news stories from practitioners in order to generate debate and promote good practice in the national libraries and the university and college sector. As well as the paper copy, the current issue of *SCONUL Focus* is also available electronically via the SCONUL website (<http://www.sconul.ac.uk>). Contributions are welcomed from colleagues in all fields and at all levels: we merely request that the items contributed are concise, informative, practical and (above all!) worth reading.

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Making plans for Nigel

An ex-colleague told me once how she had shared a train carriage with Alan Bennett. The great man –sitting in standard class– merely sat and listened to the conversations around him, presumably taking mental notes.

I thought of this story on a recent train journey to a snowy Liverpool. I was on my way to run a marketing workshop. In between thinking about what I should say about the 4Ps of the marketing mix and considering which elements of Brookes' latest campaigns deserved most attention, I kept finding myself drawn to the conversation of two passengers who had joined at Wolverhampton. Both women had recently downsized their jobs, disgusted by the lack of support they received from their line managers. Their managers had been shocked by their decisions and only realised what assets they were once they had left. Unfortunately, though, things had gone from bad to worse ...and my mind had certainly moved away from marketing:

"I get comments like 'You've not done this, you've not done that' and I'm like 'Nigel –don't go there'. I'll be leaving this one as well soon."

"Aye, then they'll see. They'll be in a right mess."

I hope I'm correct in believing that not many library managers are as bad as Nigel appeared to be (from this evidence at least). From my own experience in the workplace and from the view of the world I get via the articles submitted to this journal, ours is a profession with far more concern

for its staff. Rare is the issue of *SCONUL Focus* that does not contain at least one piece on staff development.

But one area where we may be a bit like Nigel is in succession planning. If we are to really 'future proof' the profession (to quote Judy Palmer in this issue) perhaps we need to start close to home and consider succession planning in our own institutions, and build up new leaders to stand on the shoulders of today's giants. Pat Noon kicks off this issue exploring that very theme. For those of you who attended the SCONUL 2004 Conference, this is an opportunity to relive Pat's live performance. For those who did not get to the Belfast Conference: read on. This might be your chance to avoid getting in a right mess in the future...

Antony Brewerton
SCONUL Focus Editorial Board