
Other news from SCONUL

SCONUL AND JISC

When Sir Ron Cooke, Chair of JISC, spoke at our conference in London on 8 November 2004 he invited SCONUL to engage more closely with JISC. Accordingly Suzanne Enright, Anne Bell and Toby Bainton (Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary) met Sir Ron in January. The most important outcome of the useful meeting was agreement that SCONUL should send Sir Ron a letter indicating our priorities for JISC's work. The letter was sent in April.

SCONUL AND LIBER

Very early in 2005 (6 January), the Executive Board of LIBER (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche) invited Suzanne Enright and Toby Bainton to a strategic planning meeting, held in Cambridge University Library. LIBER is reviewing its own priorities in the light of what similar organisations were planning or already doing. Also present at the meeting were Duane Webster of the Association of Research Libraries (USA and Canada), Clare Jenkins of CURL, and Nancy Elkington of the Research Libraries Group (world-wide). The wide experience of those present made for useful discussion and liaison.

HOUSE OF COMMONS EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE: ON THE E-UNIVERSITY

On 3 March the Education and Skills Committee published its report on the UK e-University (Third Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2004-05, HC 205). See

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmenduski/205/205.pdf>

UK GOVERNMENT AND THE SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS ISSUE

On 1 February the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee published its Third Special Report of Session 2004-05, 'Responses to the Committee's Tenth Report, Session 2003-04, Scientific publications: free for all?: Responses to the Committee's 14th Report of Session 2003-04' (HC 249). The text of all the Committee's Reports are available via the Committee's web pages at <http://www.parliament.uk/s&tcom>

US NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH POLICY ON SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

The US NIH has retreated from its earlier proposal of 'requiring' its grant-holders to deposit in PubMedCentral the publications resulting from their research. PubMed Central is an open access repository, allowing scholars, and indeed the public, access to published research papers in the life sciences. Given the prestige of the NIH its mere 'encouragement' to authors to deposit their publications may carry sufficient weight to change practices in the direction of open access. The announced policy is at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-022.html>

CURL/SCONUL BRIEFING ON SCHOLARLY

COMMUNICATIONS

The Joint CURL/SCONUL Scholarly Communications Group has produced a briefing paper for MPs about scientific publishing.

http://www.sconul.ac.uk/activities/sch_comm/reports.html

CURL/SCONUL HELP TO EUROPEAN COMMISSION STUDY

The Joint CURL/SCONUL Group on Scholarly Communication has recently supplied information (largely based on SCONUL's statistics) to the economists at the University of Toulouse who have been commissioned to conduct a study for the European Commission on the scientific publications market in Europe.

OPEN ACCESS: A NEW BIBLIOGRAPHY

If you'd like to read more about the open access movement and its impact on scholarly communication, the Association of Research Libraries (USA and Canada) recently published a bibliography. See <http://www.arl.org/pubscat/pubs/openaccess/>

HEFCE PLAN SEEMS TO SUPPORT OPEN ACCESS

The new revision of HEFCE's strategic plan 2003-08 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_16/ contains (at paragraph 11 of the section on Enhancing excellence in research) some encouraging remarks for the development of institutional repositories and other means of disseminating research results outwith the traditional scholarly journals market.

FIRST SHOTS FIRED IN VAT BATTLE

SCONUL and Universities UK (amongst other allies) are coordinating political pressure about the UK's VAT regime, which levies tax on electronic publications but not on printed ones. Charles Hendry, MP for Wealden, tabled two parliamentary questions recently, asking the

Chancellor of the Exchequer how much had been raised through VAT on electronically published materials in each of the past 10 years, and how many universities have protested about it.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC SECTOR INFORMATION

On freedom of information in the UK, SCONUL's Advisory Committee on Access to Information Systems and Services issued as one of its last acts, an advice note which is available at <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/activities/access/papers/>

Subtly different from Freedom of Information, which on 1 January became a real issue in the UK with the coming into force of the relevant Acts, is the concept of Public Sector Information. SCONUL helped lobby to exclude cultural and educational institutions from the requirements of the European Directive on this topic. But universities may benefit from it, when it becomes law in the UK and Ireland, through enhanced possibilities of exploiting and reusing information produced by public sector bodies. It may well fall to libraries to organise the information newly available to higher education institutions. The EC Public Sector Information Directive will become law in the UK on 1 July 2005.

JISC RESPONDS TO DFES E-LEARNING STRATEGY

JISC's recent response (15 March) to the English Department for Education and Skills e-learning strategy is more quickly absorbed than the 359 kb of the strategy itself
http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=news_estrategy

If you have no time to read the entire DfES strategy it may be worth concentrating on paras 78 - 97: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy/>

HEFCE E-LEARNING STRATEGY PUBLISHED

As announced on [lis-sconul](http://www.sconul.ac.uk) on 9 March, HEFCE published early this month its own e-learning strategy: see http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_12/ SCONUL and UCISA get a mention on p15

LAUNCH OF SUNCAT

On 15 February the national Serials Union Catalogue (SUNCAT) was launched. Reg Carr, Director of Oxford University Library Services & Bodley's Librarian, and Chair of JISC's Integrated Information Environment committee, said that SUNCAT will fill a gap in provision and bring real benefit to a wide range of users of serials. See

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=pr_new_national_resource_news_150205

HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMY

Early in February the Academy announced to its registered practitioners that it will no longer require an annual fee from them: instead, registration will depend on a practitioner's commitment to their own continuing professional development. See http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/news/1370_2255.htm

Suzanne Enright, SCONUL's Chair, has been consulted by a consultant working for the Academy (Allan Schofield) assessing future options for the HEA.

GATS: WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH LIBRARIES?

This is a serious question. The General Agreement on Trade in Services potentially covers education and libraries. Education is big business (as an export it earns New Zealand more than the wine industry) and international commercial operators are keen to move in. Why should fee-charging universities and colleges enjoy state subsidies which make foreign competition virtually impossible? A conference organised in Cambridge by EBLIDA in partnership with SCONUL on 2 and 3 March explored this topic, helped by the journalist and author George Monbiot amongst other expert speakers. See http://www.sconul.ac.uk/event_conf/WTOConference/wto-programme (programme): a report appears in this issue of *Focus*. Any service that could be run by a commercial company is potentially open to commercial competition under GATS, and unfortunately higher education in the UK has demonstrated that companies can provide information services. International trade agreements are now firmly on EBLIDA's, and SCONUL's, international lobbying agenda. See also 'GATS gets going again' on p.6 of AUT outlook, 234, March 2005. As with international agreements on copyright, the commercial world is calling the shots and the civil servants doing the negotiating simply don't understand library services.

DR DIANA LEITCH

Dr Diana Leitch, Assistant Director and Deputy University Librarian of the John Rylands University Library, Manchester, has been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry in recognition of her contribution to the development and provision of information resources in chemistry and allied subjects. She is the first librarian to have achieved this distinction.

A SITE YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

SCONUL's very own Philip Larkin was one of the powers behind the Location Register of English Literary Manuscripts and Letters: he was irritated when the papers of authors (writing in English) disappeared abroad because people were unaware of the obvious home for them in Britain or Ireland. The Location Register is now suitably web-based and is an under-used resource for literary scholars and special collections librarians. See <http://www.library.rdg.ac.uk/colls/projects/locreg.html>

SCONUL CONFERENCE BREAKS RECORDS

Our conference in Brighton on 6-8 April broke previous attendance records and resulted in some major new policy directions: see Suzanne Enright's report as SCONUL Chair at http://www.sconul.ac.uk/event_conf/agm2005/agm-briefing.html

INSPIRE: PROGRESS ON MANY FRONTS

INSPIRE, the scheme to provide simpler access to varied libraries for all kinds of user, is growing apace. For example, the Derbyshire Information Group has agreed to register with INSPIRE, and subregional development is under way in the West Midlands and the South East of England. In the North East of England INSPIRE has achieved lift-off. Expressions of interest are coming from health libraries, further education libraries, and JISC's Common Information Environment. The website www.inspire.gov.uk is undergoing serious development.

SCONUL AND UCISA IN TALKS WITH THE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

Representatives of SCONUL and UCISA met at the Leadership Foundation on 18 April to discuss further a course for leaders and potential leaders in our two closely-related professions. The Leadership Foundation's new prospectus has been published <http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/prospectusb.pdf> and can also be reached from the 'Useful links' section at <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/activities/links.html>