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# SCONUL's international strategy



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SCONUL is already an international association, representing both the UK and Irish member libraries, and its member institutions operate in an increasingly internationalised environment. SCONUL has been involved for a long time in a range of international activities and the Secretary has established extensive international links on behalf of SCONUL. Many of us have diverse international links, either personally or through our institutions, which may be members of international networks such as INU (International Network of Universities) and Universitas 21. In addition, many SCONUL members have new responsibilities for the provision of library and information services to international off-campus students and for the delivery of services to international students on their UK campuses.

In addition, information now has no constraints of time and space and many of the commercial organisations that members interact with, such as publishers and library system suppliers, operate internationally. Developments in scholarly communication such as open access and eResearch activity have international implications and therefore demand international collaboration.

It is important, therefore, that SCONUL members are not only aware of relevant international activities and initiatives but are in a position to contribute to and influence their development on behalf of their institutions and the wider academic library community. The recent review of the SCONUL Secretariat recommended that SCONUL's international activities should be framed by an international strategy and I was asked by the Executive Board to take the lead on developing this strategy. The strategy will encourage SCONUL members to think internationally and will provide a framework, together with priorities for action, to guide the Executive Board

as it plans and leads SCONUL's international activities.

The key aims of the strategy are that:

- SCONUL's Vision, Mission and Objectives should reflect its international perspective
- the Executive Board and all groups should identify and regularly consider relevant potential international dimensions as part of the annual planning cycle to ensure that 'internationalism' is mainstreamed in all SCONUL's activities
- SCONUL should establish both international partnerships and international collaborations
- SCONUL's international links should be identified, prioritised, regularly reviewed, consolidated and maintained
- there should be a programme of SCONUL International Study Tours organised by members
- there should be a programme of joint conferences/conference participation with similar bodies
- the SCONUL access scheme for academic staff and researchers should relate with other national/international library access schemes
- SCONUL should promote the international exchange of staff through existing schemes
- SCONUL's role in fostering international collaboration should be publicised internally and externally.

The intention is to mainstream internationalism throughout SCONUL's work and the strategic statement has been revised to reflect our international focus and activities. In addition, all groups have been asked to consider the international dimension of their work in their action plans. There are a number of organisations that SCONUL already works with and, through the strategy, will now develop more formal working relationships with:

- CARL (Canadian Association of Research Libraries)
- CHELSA (Committee of Higher Education Libraries in South Africa)
- ARL (Association of Research Libraries)
- CAUL (Council of Australian University Libraries)
- EDUCAUSE.

SCONUL has organised study tours in the past to Barcelona, to New York and, with CURL, to Australia, and a further programme of international study tours is being developed to link

with SCONUL conferences and other events. In 2007 there was a very successful study tour to South Africa which visited 15 university libraries and ended in Durban prior to the IFLA meeting (see the article by John MacColl in this issue of *SCONUL Focus*). This study tour is leading to longer-term cooperation with CHELSA's member libraries. Members of CARL have just completed a short study visit to the UK and they participated in SCONUL's winter conference. Maxine Melling, Director of Library and Information Services at John Moores University, is organising a study tour to Canada in October 2008, to coincide with CARL's winter conference. There will be a SCONUL study tour in 2009 to Scandinavia and some library directors from those countries are being invited to the 2008 SCONUL conference in Edinburgh in June. The SCONUL Access Steering Group is working with organisations in other countries to extend library access for visiting academic staff and researchers who are temporarily working abroad and it is hoped to explore the possibility of international staff exchanges with our partners.

More evidence of SCONUL's international activities can be found throughout the rest of this issue of *Focus*.