
A 'farewell' from Toby Bainton



This issue of *SCONUL Focus* offers a wonderful opportunity for me to say 'goodbye and thank you' to countless people who contribute to the SCONUL enterprise. Our aim has always been to improve library services for our users by harnessing the power of collaboration. Our founders in 1950 did this by helping and advising each other at the head-of-service level. Nowadays all kinds of staff in our member libraries are involved. To some people, 'SCONUL' means, perhaps with gritted teeth, completing our annual statistical return. To others it means writing an article for *SCONUL Focus* or managing the distribution of SCONUL Access cards to students or researchers. Literally hundreds of people take part in an intricate pattern of mutual support.

Working as Secretary I have had the satisfaction of seeing the pattern from the eye-piece of the kaleidoscope. The design has a strong basic structure – the Executive Board sets the strategy, the Working Groups develop special areas of expertise and manage much of the work, while the secretariat lobbies, liaises, and coordinates multiple initiatives and policies. Within the SCONUL community, various groups such as CONUL, SCURL, WHELP and RLUK all rightly maintain their independent strategies. SCONUL's structure encourages, when people wish it, the pursuit of a wider common purpose.

Working for SCONUL has combined, for me, the librarian's satisfaction in service to customers (our members) with a high-level view of how the profession is developing. Indeed I believe that SCONUL does help to shape the development of academic and national libraries. Certainly on the legal front we have been able to defend libraries from unwanted restrictions on their services. Sometimes (the UK Terrorism and Digital Economy Acts) these restrictions have been inadvertent. But more often quite deliberate legislative moves are made to limit library operations, in order to expand commercial activities. This will clearly continue.

Apart from the buzz of meeting politicians and senior officials, the biggest pleasure of my years in SCONUL has been working side-by-side with so many hardworking, determined and visionary people. Librarians are great people to work with and to have fun with. Thank you all.

Toby Bainton
SCONUL Secretary