



Leading libraries SCONUL Experience Exchange Register

Prepared by

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1. Introduction

This briefing paper is intended as an introduction to the SCONUL Experience Exchange Register. This can be used by library leaders to contact others who have experience to share and is particularly useful when encountering new and / or challenging situations.

It is designed to complement other similar SCONUL initiatives (e.g. the existing SCONUL email discussion lists and the new mentoring scheme) as part of a network of leadership-related peer support tools for SCONUL professionals and leaders.

2. What is the Experience Exchange Register?

The register was created by the SCONUL Leadership Task and Finish Group in 2017. It was introduced at the 2017 SCONUL conference in Newcastle and formally launched at the SCONUL Leading Libraries event in Cavendish Square, London in October 2017.

It is a register of SCONUL members' experience in strategic leadership areas and was created using data from a survey of SCONUL members willing to share their knowledge and experience. Members' details are held centrally by the SCONUL Office and are used to pair those seeking informal and confidential advice, guidance or simply a sounding board.

This is not a register of self-declared 'experts' but rather of relevant, useful, and recent experience and will inevitably include experience of initiatives which haven't necessarily worked according to plan.

Members' personal data is confidential and not publicly available. The SCONUL office acts as a broker between those requesting and providing information. The SCONUL office may use information gathered at sector level (e.g. for advocacy on behalf of the sector) but this will not be attributable to individuals or their organisations and this was communicated to members who completed the survey.

The areas covered for 2017 – 18, together with an indication of the availability of experience, are:

Leading change	Strategic thinking	Leading projects	Other areas
Articulating vision & inspiring others	Advocacy	Space planning / learning spaces	Financial management
Managing rapid & dramatic change	Horizon scanning	Successful business cases	Building resilience
Large scale restructuring	Adopting new areas	Major IT systems	Diplomacy
	Developing leaders	Sharing services	Collaboration with public libraries / heritage
	Building credibility	International campuses / partners	Philanthropic giving
			Public engagement

Key:

	40+ members offering advice
	20+ members
	<20 members

3. How does it work?

The scheme is entirely voluntary and informal and relies on the goodwill of all those participating. It is hoped that those who benefit will, in turn, add their details to the register in order to help others in the future.

Details regarding duration and depth of support will be discussed and agreed by both parties at the start of the help period. This is not designed to be a lengthy, formal or commercial scheme. Members have provided their details willingly and voluntarily to help fellow SCONUL members by sharing their experience, whether large or small.

The 2017/18 academic year is the first year of operation for this scheme which will be evaluated after twelve months. Anonymised details and statistics relating to help requested / provided will be collated within the SCONUL community as a way of sharing leadership challenges and experiences and as an early identifier of fresh and emerging challenges within the community. This will enable future and strategic planning, particularly in terms of skills requirements / gaps.

If the first year of operation is considered successful, members will be asked to refresh their details so the list is current and up to date.

4. The experience exchange process

The SCONUL office maintains members' details within the register and publishes the range of experience available. Once you have identified an area of interest, there are four steps within the Register process:

- a) **Request:** Contact the SCONUL office by phone or email to discuss details of your request.
- b) **Adviser match:** The SCONUL office will identify and contact a suitable register member to ascertain availability and suitability.
- c) **Conversation and support:** The register member will contact the member requesting support and a confidential conversation will take place. The frequency of contact and depth of support will be discussed and agreed between both members at the start.
- d) **Evaluation:** After three months, the SCONUL office will contact both parties for feedback on the process and the experience.

In addition, the requesting member will be asked to offer their new experience to others by joining the register.



5. What are the benefits of using the register?

There are many benefits to both register members and requesters. The most immediate benefit is in helping a requester negotiate a particularly challenging and / or difficult scenario in a more targeted and confidential way than the existing email discussion lists.

Other benefits include expanding the SCONUL and professional network, sharing experience and knowledge more widely, early identification and discussion of new and emerging trends, evidence of continuing professional development.

6. Conclusion

SCONUL members are already very well versed in making use of the SCONUL network. This register adds another deliberate dimension to that network and has been devised as part of a suite of leadership-related initiatives created in 2017 to help members confidently negotiate the daily challenge of leading libraries into the future.

