The Really Effective College Library

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project was envisaged in two phases. Phase one (1995-7) involved a review of evidence about the extent of library support of teaching and learning in further education. A report on phase one was published by the Further Education Development Agency in 1997[1] as part of the British Library Research Series.

Phase two of the project (1997-9) developed and monitored a series of initiatives in seven FE colleges aimed at enhancing library support for teaching and learning in a variety of settings, including the concept of the library as a dynamic provider of learning means of helping to deliver the curriculum. This phase also focused on performance indicators and offered the concepts of impact and achievement indicators and targets to more fully reflect this work, and develop practitioners workshops for college librarians, curriculum managers and teachers to encourage their adoption.

1   Project aims

The aims for phase two of this project were:

•   to clarify the main elements of the library contribution to the learning and development of further education students and staff (begun in Phase one)

•   to examine the similarities and differences in approach being pursued by FE colleges, sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges in this context (begun in Phase one)

•   to study the implementation of specific library strategies for contributing to and supporting teaching and learning

•   to assess whether these strategies have real impact on students and staff

•   to prepare performance indicators to reflect this work, and

•   to make proposals for implementing and monitoring relevant initiatives aimed at enhancing the library contribution in this context.

2   Context

Since moving to incorporated status in April 1993, most colleges have experienced a period of rapid growth followed by steady retreachment and this experience is echoed in college libraries and learning resource centres (for the sake of simplicity we have used the term 'libraries' to describe the full range of bibliographically-based resource centres in FE colleges).

Major changes have occurred in FE teaching and learning, including reduced taught hours, increased student numbers (including part-time and mature students) and consequently, greater resort to versions of resource-based learning, usually relying increasingly heavily on ICT.

3   The phase two report

The phase one report took the form of a 'traditional' research publication, reflecting the results of a national questionnaire survey and a series of visits to colleges which were seeking to support teaching and learning in interesting ways. The present report has been conceived as a modular

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[1] STREATFIELD, D. R. and MARKLESS, S. *The effective college library* British Library Research and Innovation Report 21 *Developing FE Series* 1 (8) London: Further Education Development Agency 1997.

publication, aimed at ensuring that various parts are written up in accessible ways for different target audiences – that is, putting the reporting emphasis on dissemination rather than just reporting back to the funders. To this end:

Part A of the report consists of an overview of phase two and has been prepared primarily for the LIC, for academic researchers and for strategic policy makers;

Part B focuses on the process, devised through the project, of engendering impact and achievement indictors and targets for SE libraries, but also draws on our experience with other sectors of librarianship.

This has been produced in the form of a journal article for librarians.

Part C brings together the four main case studies used in the project workshops and adds commentary from the evaluation interviews to make a set of free-standing case studies. We intend to publish these directly to FE curriculum managers and librarians.

Part D is a summation of the main issues considered during phase two of the project and has again been prepared in journal article form for the education and education library communities.

Part E is a briefing note aimed at senior curriculum managers and college principals.

Following requests form college librarians on our workshops, we have agreed to make the full set of parts available for them.

4   The work programme

Monitoring seven initiatives

Seven college libraries volunteered to work with the project team between Autumn 1997 and Spring 1999 on a variety of different initiatives to support teaching and learning which they already intended to pursue. In each case we agreed on relevant performance indicators and targets with them (to ensure a common purpose and to test the use of specific indicators in approaching particular goals); and agreed to share the external and internal evaluation results. We ran an initial workshop for these purposes with representatives of 11 potential case study colleges. The seven eventually selected were working on initiatives with three broad areas:

- developing the technology to support learning
- teaching information skills
- building real collaboration by different means (team teaching to supporting faculty-based resource-based learning development groups).

5   Seminars and workshops

A pair of invitation workshops was held in Exeter and London towards the end of phase two to encourage discussion of the emerging results with a total of 34 librarians. A pair of workshops for lecturers, curriculum managers and librarians was organised in March and April 1999 to begin applying the lessons learnt. These events were both fully subscribed, with a total of 55 participants (including 20 curriculum managers).

6   Project findings

The main project findings covered:

♦   The roles of the Librarian – based on clarity in making choices and in concentrating on the main priorities, and confidence in talking about teaching and learning issues
♦   Some differences between FE colleges and Sixth Form colleges:
♦   A range of views on the contribution made by the LRC/Library to the College were encountered and each of these was explored:
              - a place from which students could retrieve specific information

- a place for students to go when not being taught
- a purposeful environment where students can learn independently
- a place to support learning through access to information

7 Issues in becoming more effective

These were identified as:

♦ ensuring that the basic service continues
♦ achieving a clear focus for development
♦ maintaining a distinction between information and knowledge
♦ operating at strategic level.

8 Impact measurement

Our work highlighted a number of points:

- None of the case study colleges had collected relevant baseline information at the outset.
- Traditional performance indicators and targets are useful in assessing the efficiency of the library as an operating system but tell very little about impact or achievement.
- Similarly, benchmarking of library services can be helpful in comparing the efficiency of the library as a system with other libraries or services, but again there is little to be gleaned through benchmarking about comparative impact and achievement.
- similar initiatives may be undertaken for different reasons and these reasons should be reflected in the choice of impact indicators.
- A balance between performance targets and impact targets is desirable.
- Much potentially useful information is routinely collected by teachers.
- An important consideration is why the impact information is being collected.

[See also Part B]

9 Conclusions from the overview

These covered:

➢ Staffing: developing roles and skills for information skills training and ICT delivery and support.
➢ Cross-college development - as one of the major cross-college services the library is a potentially important locus.
➢ ICT applications in education. Various approaches have been taken by the case study libraries in responding to the rapidly increasing deployment of ICT.
➢ Key skills development. The key skills movement is now solidly established as a mandatory aspect of education and there is current discussion about key skills at 'A' level.

[Part A; presented again with different emphasis in part E]

10 College case studies

The four selected studies explored issues in:

Information technology-focused development (Case 1)
Resource-based learning (Case 2)
Teaching information skills (Case 3)
Preparing for development of information skills work in a new Study Centre (Case 4)   [Part C]

11 Themes

Some recurrent themes and issues from all seven case studies include:

1	Individual student support/enquiry work
2	Developing information skills
3	Enhancing the range and quality of resources
4	Liaison with academic staff
5	Work within management structures
6	Library space
7	Roles and skills of LRC staff

12   Issues from the Case Studies

♦ Effective and sustained communication between Librarians, teaching staff and students (using e-mail, bulletins and meetings) is necessary
♦ Robust IT systems "that work and don't show you up" are required
♦ Recognising how IT advances are affecting education.
♦ Rapidly advancing information technology is likely to change the relationship between Librarians and teaching staff
♦ The students are also expected to be changed by increased information access but people were wary about making automatic assumptions about their IT competence.

[Part D]

The Really Effective College Library?

Report on Phase 2 of the Effective College Library Project

Sharon Markless and David Streatfield

CONTENTS

NB   Each Part of this report is intended to be read independently (the target audience for each Part is indicated). Appendices and further reading are linked to the appropriate Part.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Really Effective College Library?

Report on Phase 2 of the Effective College Library Project

Sharon Markless and David Streatfield

PART A: Overview of the Project

N.B. The term 'library' has been used here to refer to the libraries or learning [resource] centres of FE institutions. The term 'college' has been used to refer to FE institutions, including sixth form colleges, FE colleges and tertiary colleges.

1   Introduction

This project was envisaged in two phases. The focus of the whole project was on the part played by libraries and learning resource centres in supporting teaching and learning in further education colleges. Phase one of this project involved a review of evidence about the extent of library support of teaching and learning. A report on this work was published by the Further Education Development Agency in the Spring of 1997 as part of the British Library Research Series[2].

Phase two of the Project entailed working with various colleges on aspects of library support in order to explore the concept of the library as a dynamic provider of learning and means of helping to deliver the curriculum. The colleges involved prepared performance indicators to focus and reflect this work, which culminated in two invitation seminars for college librarians to review the emerging results, followed by a pair of training workshops for librarians, curriculum managers and lecturers to encourage the adoption of good practice emerging from the project.

Phase one of this project was completed in April 1996 and was jointly funded by the (then) British Library Research and Development Department and the Further Education Development Agency. Phase two of the project commenced in October 1997 and was completed in June 1999.

2   Project aims

The aims for Phase two of the project were:

• to clarify the main elements of the library contribution to the learning and development of further education students and staff (begun in Phase one)

• to examine the similarities and differences in approach being pursued by FE colleges, sixth form colleges and tertiary colleges in this context (begun in Phase one)

• to study the implementation of specific library strategies for contributing to and supporting teaching and learning

• to assess whether these strategies have real impact on students and staff

• to prepare performance indicators to reflect this work, and

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[2] STREATFIELD, D. R. and MARKLESS, S. *The effective college library* British Library Research and Innovation Report 21 *Developing FE Series* 1 (8) London: Further Education Development Agency 1997.

- to make proposals for implementing and monitoring relevant initiatives aimed at enhancing the library contribution in this context.

Stated in other terms, the mission for Phase two of the Project was to answer two key questions:

What can librarians and learning resource centres really do to support teaching and learning?

Does this make any difference and how can we tell what difference?

3   The context of the research

3.1   The changing world of Further Education

Further Education institutions of all kinds have continued to undergo major change and their libraries are not protected from this turbulent environment (FEFC: 1994). Colleges moved to incorporated status in April 1993 and their governors assumed broader responsibilities for financial management within a different regional administrative structure. In this new and more competitive environment it is important for FE colleges to demonstrate how they are supporting their learning programmes. The role of the college library is significant here, but only if its contribution can be clearly identified.

The common denominators in most colleges are that they are faced with increased demands for a variety of courses, often involving greater numbers of students, to be delivered without any commensurate increase in resources and often with reduced staff, budgets and teaching hours.

These common denominators have led to one fairly general response, in that college senior management teams have been forced to reassess the issues surrounding curriculum resourcing and support in a systematic manner. However, this general response has not resulted in uniform consolidation or retrenchment; instead colleges have responded by redeploying their overall resources in different ways that reflect the college history, experience and ethos (Hamm *and others:* 1995). It follows that effectiveness in supporting teaching and learning should be seen as context specific and that each approach to curriculum resourcing will reveal different strengths and weaknesses and will probably result in different elements of success and failure. However, we have found some common threads which should help to enable people to learn from eachothers' experience.

The recent changes have also affected *sixth form colleges*, which are not only part of the new financial regime but are opening their doors to a wider range of students, including adults (COLRIC: 1994). Again, this is having an effect on approaches to teaching and learning and is putting fresh demands on library services.

3.2   College libraries and change

The 1993 Follett *Libraries Review Group report* excited renewed interest in the functions of university libraries and had some impact on the FE sector, where many college librarians and their managers considered that issues raised by Follett were equally ripe for their attention.

Margaret Chapman's survey of the information skills work conducted by FE librarians, again funded by the (then) British Library Research and Development Department, confirmed that most college libraries were making efforts in this direction, but that the work done continued to be largely piecemeal and reactive rather than strategic in approach (Chapman: 1996; see also Morrison and Markless: 1992).

Renewed attention has certainly been given to the importance of information technology in supporting colleges as they undergo major curriculum and pedagogical change, through publication of the Higginson Committee report (FEFC: 1996), the work leading up to this (Gray and Warrender: 1995) and the consequent QUILT ICT training programme for lecturers led by FEDA. Efforts in this area are likely to be consolidated by the announced extension of the Universities' Joint Information Systems' Committee remit to include the FE sector.

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In competing for resources in this environment, the Further Education library must be able to show the senior management how it contributes to the central activities of the institution - teaching and learning. Various models of the interaction between libraries and their colleges in supporting teaching and learning were described in the Phase one report.

Other issues faced by college libraries include resource support for franchising, involvement of part-time students and information skills induction for students linked to the demands of resource-based learning.

4 The Project programme

4.1 The general approach

The approach adopted for Phase two was to combine the skills of professional researchers and practitioners in carrying out the project aims. Seven FE librarians combined with the two Research Consultants to help negotiate access to suitable colleges, clarify the local strategies adopted, create and execute evaluation programmes, and prepare workshops at which the findings and their implications were actively considered. The aim of this collaboration between researchers and colleges was to provide a 'pay-off' on both sides. For the colleges, this meant help in clarifying how to undertake the initiative, support in creating appropriate performance indicators to help colleges gauge success, as well as advice and support in tackling the task. They also drew on external evaluation, an overview of the initiative in a broader FE development context, and hopefully, good publicity for the service.

Where the research team gained was in the assurance that the initiatives undertaken were relevant, involvement by practitioners in the project programme, field-testing of some performance indicators and evaluation of several initiatives likely to be of interest to other colleges.

The college libraries represented by the seven librarians[3] were involved in various ways. Some of the initiatives were centred on librarian-induced exploitation of information technology. This involved building a database of course materials, creating an 'institutional gateway' or otherwise building IT resources into curriculum design and delivery. Other initiatives centred on the collaboration between librarians and teachers in equipping students with specific information skills required to use electronic information sources or in mounting and delivering more or less ambitious skills development programmes. (An eighth initiative was intended to focus on using the complementary skills of librarians and IT staff in promoting IT as an effective teaching and learning tool. Unfortunately this proposal fell foul of a sudden 'sea change' in the college which involved down-playing any reference to fusion of work roles because of lecturing staff hostility in the wake of staff cuts. The key outcome here was a salutary lesson about ensuring that library initiatives continue to fit in with the college priorities.)

The overall intention was to concentrate attention on potential areas of collaboration, co-operation and mutually beneficial experience rather than on the diversity of provision within the FE sector. Some of the instruments used to gather information are shown in appendix B.

4.2 The models

Five models of effective college library contribution to and support for teaching and learning were constructed in Phase one of the project (one with three variants) and formed the basis for selecting the seven case study colleges. These were:

Model A: Non-convergent resource provision

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[3] The contract with the British Library called for five case study colleges but the participants agreed to undertake seven (initially eight) case studies without additional resources.

Model B: Opportunistic intervention

Model C: Strategic intervention

Model D: Skills-driven interventions

Model E: Promoting resource-based learning:

- *educational rationale*
- *financial imperative*
- *financial imperative to change but seeking to maintain high quality learning*

The prime features of each of these models are summarised in appendix A to this overview.

It was evident that the Non-convergent model was highly adaptive to individual circumstances, depending heavily on the personality and professional philosophy of the librarian as well as the particular standpoint of the college. Accordingly, this model was excluded from phase two since there were unlikely to be generalizable conclusions and applicable lessons for other colleges.

Exemplars of each of the remaining models were identified as participant colleges for Phase two. Each college library was chosen on the basis of a specific intervention to support teaching and learning as part of the project. One stipulation at the outset was that each of these interventions was likely to have been undertaken by the college library whether or not the project had been involved.

4.3   Project methodology

The project was intended to learn more about effective library contribution to and support for teaching and learning with a view to clarifying issues and presenting workable approaches. Since a theory generating rather than a hypothesis testing approach appeared appropriate to this type of programme, we adopted a limited form of the Illuminative Evaluation methodology (Parlett and Dearden: 1981) within an action research framework. This approach allowed progressive refocusing and analysis of what case study sites were doing and whether and how this was working, applying ideas drawn from 'grounded theory' as advocated by Glaser (1978).

An important element in our approach was to involve college librarians in the research design and delivery to ensure that the criteria for evaluation adopted were appropriate and that the issues treated were of practical concern. As described below, we fed the emerging results back to seminars of college librarians and later to workshops consisting of college managers and librarians.

Relevant policy documents were gathered from each of the institutions involved. The implications of each case study for the future of learning development was specifically addressed with all the participating colleges, as well as in the seminars and workshops described below. Although we recognise that successful initiatives cannot necessarily be translated piecemeal into other settings with expectations of similar success, part of our effort was spent in trying to tease out specific approaches and strategies likely to apply more generally. Towards the end of the project, interviews were conducted with key managers, teachers, librarians/learning centre managers and selected students on case study sites to address these issues as well as to glean people's views on any innovations introduced as part of the project.

This phase of the project was conceived as being driven by performance indicators and targets. The rationale involved recognising the growing importance of performance indicators in all areas of library service delivery, especially education libraries. An important part of the evolution of the project occurred in our gradual shift in emphasis from efficiency measures to concern with impact and achievement indicators and targets. A core question for this phase of the project was "How

can you tell if you are making a difference to teaching and learning if you don't know where you are starting from or how you can judge what you have achieved?" Our intentions were to:

❖ agree relevant performance indicators and targets for the chosen initiatives with the participating colleges

❖ use the PIs and targets as the focus for the research by sharing the external and internal evaluation results based on these criteria

❖ in doing so, field-test a series of specific initiatives aimed at improving support for teaching and learning in colleges, and

❖ test the appropriateness of the performance indicators, targets and methodology for arriving at these during the research.

To this end, an introductory invitation meeting was called for representatives of 11 colleges where staff had expressed interest in becoming involved with the project during the workshops held at the conclusion of Phase one.

The relationship between the project consultants and practitioner-researchers can best be described by reference to the initial proposals to colleges at this meeting:

Essentially, what we are currently doing is finding five active collaborator-Librarians/Learning Resources Managers who will take on a specific curriculum intervention with some help from us.

This will entail the **Librarian/LRC Manager**:

♦ choosing a particular initiative for their own college (to commence, or enter a new phase early next year)

♦ working with us on developing appropriate performance indicators to assess whether the initiative is succeeding (at the proposed event)

♦ calling on us for any appropriate help in making the initiative work (during next year)

♦ giving us (or arranging for us to obtain) access to relevant staff and students in providing an external dimension to the evaluation

♦ sharing the results of the internal evaluation with us.

The thrust of the project may become a little clearer if we summarise the 'pay off' to the colleges and to the project:

Advantages for the college:

♦ help in clarifying how to undertake your initiative (we assume that it will be the sort of thing that colleges would like to undertake in any case)

♦ support in developing appropriate performance indicators to help colleges gauge success

♦ advice and support in tackling the task

♦ some external evaluation

♦ an overview of the initiative in a broader FE development context

♦ limited payment for time

♦ hopefully, good publicity for the service – assuming that the research project is a success!

Advantages for the project:

♦ assurance that the initiatives undertaken are relevant – at least to one college!

♦ practitioner involvement in the project programme

♦ field-testing of some performance indicators

♦ evaluation of several initiatives likely to be of interest to other colleges

4.4   The core work in Phase Two

The emphasis in phase two was on learning more about the initiatives undertaken by the seven collaborating colleges, all sharing the aim of supporting teaching and learning.

Although the colleges involved were exploring a wide range of initiatives, all of these, as well as other initiatives described by participants at the project seminars and workshops, made their impact in one of three key (and sometimes overlapping) areas:

♦ developing the technology to support learning (e.g. by creating integrated access to a wide range of resources using LRC-generated IT gateways)

♦ teaching information skills (e.g. through accredited learning skills modules)

♦ real collaboration:

- small or large scale (team teaching to RBL projects)

- outside the library (e.g. through resource-based learning development groups in different faculties each generating an element of RBL)

- new roles/skills (e.g. by focussing on an information skills pilot programme to help guide decisions about the organisation, staffing and structure of a planned new learning centre)

several of the individual initiatives are described as case studies in Part C below.

4.5   Getting the messages across

An initial exploratory event for was held in London in November 1997 and attended by the eleven potential project participants. This took the form of a workshop on performance indicators and targets and was designed to ensure that participating college libraries would be working from the same basic precepts in deciding how they would judge success.

A pair of invitation seminars for curriculum managers and librarians/learning centre managers was organised in Exeter and London towards the end of this Phase of the project to encourage discussion of the emerging results and to consider implications for the future support of teaching and learning in colleges. Ideas from these seminars are incorporated in the various elements of the report below.

The specific objectives of the two seminars were:

❑ to report the results of some of the college initiatives undertaken as part of the project
❑ to outline the project findings so far
❑ to gather participants' views on the results and their implications, and
❑ to glean views on how this work should be presented to be of maximum use to the field

Both events were well attended, with 17 participants at each one (in addition to the 'project librarians').

In addition to the initial workshop focused on generating performance indicators and targets, we organised a pair of workshops aimed at college curriculum managers, lecturers and librarians to begin applying the lessons learnt from the project. These workshops (which were held in Leeds and London) also served to further refine the research findings and provide additional evidence drawn from the experience of the practitioners involved. Again, the events were well attended (reaching the maximum numbers of 30 and 25 participants respectively). In response to demand, a modified version of this workshop was held under the auspices of CoFHE at Taunton in November, attracting a further 26 librarians.

The objectives for these three workshops were to enable College Librarians/Learning Resources Staff, Teachers and Curriculum Managers to:

❑ look critically at the project findings
❑ pick out what was of interest to them
❑ decide how to get these ideas and programmes of activity adopted in their own Colleges, and
❑ work out how to implement them.

The workshops drew upon the experience of the case study colleges and directly involved five of the researcher librarians. The aim was to combine the best of the theory and practice to help people decide on their own way forward.

5   The effective college library: some conclusions

During the course of the project we found ourselves considering and revisiting a series of topics which together provided a context for effective working. We also became increasingly convinced that various factors contributed directly to effectiveness in actively supporting teaching and learning. Some of the general contextual issues are considered first below before we turn attention to some of the 'levers' to becoming effective.

5.1   Talking curriculum

College librarians and LRC managers adopt a wide variety of approaches when seeking to bring about or support change. Whatever the approach, success appears to depend upon clarity in making choices and in concentrating on the main priorities, to the extent that college curriculum managers are aware of what libraries are trying to do and (at least in broad terms) how successfully. A common refrain in talking to teaching staff was that their college librarians are doing more than the teachers expected and that they are having an impact in particular areas. More specifically, the college library staff in at least three of the successful initiatives showed confidence in talking about teaching and learning issues in relation to specific students and courses, using 'curriculum speak' rather than just advising on which learning materials and resources should be obtained.

5.2   Some differences between FE colleges and Sixth Form colleges

As a sweeping generalisation, we saw greater differences amongst sixth-form colleges than in FE colleges. Sixth-form colleges vary in their range of students, to what extent they are abandoning their traditional sixth form role in favour of vocational courses and increased adult (and part-time) intake, their response to ICT and their use of the library. These differences are discussed below.

Several of these factors are linked to the relatively small size of many sixth-form colleges. FE colleges, and metropolitan FE colleges in particular, are likely to cover much larger areas (sometimes across several sites) and to enrol many more students than their sixth form college

equivalents. This can result in colleges attracting a culturally and socially diverse intake despite being positioned in the 'leafy suburbs'. By contrast, we saw widely different looking sixth-form colleges where an important factor is that each is drawing upon a particular and relatively small catchment area (although each is relatively homogeneous).

Sixth-form colleges were originally set up to cater for the elite students moving on from local schools to study for their 'A' level exams. Most now cater for a broader range of students pursuing other courses (e.g. GNVQ) and some have extended in the directions of adult and continuing education. Typical FE colleges operate with a wide range of students (from basic vocational courses up to degree courses in some cases) often studying part-time and attending in the evenings.

Where the sixth-form college has maintained its traditional role this tends to reduce impact in the area of lifelong learning. Since most FE colleges tend to operate with students of all ages from 16 upwards they are probably better placed to meet the demand for relatively informal (rather than exam-focused) lifelong learning. This is not to underestimate the important role of sixth form colleges in equipping students to move on into a life of continuing (or intermittent return to) learning.

A more or less common factor, however, is that when the sixth-form colleges were incorporated a few years ago, their libraries were starting from a base that was:

- lower (in levels of expenditure on staff and resources)
- narrower (in range of resources)
- more cramped (with insufficient space to accommodate different types of working – such as groupwork, computer use and quiet reading), and
- more limited (in teacher expectations of the library staff).

Some sixth-form colleges were able to dramatically improve their libraries, but in places where growth was initially slower any progress has been inhibited by more recent cuts in FE funding.

Where 'A' level courses still flourish in sixth-form colleges, this tends to limit the scope of librarians to engage with teaching staff, since there is generally less emphasis on research-based assignments and independent learning. Where the agenda has broadened, this tends to exacerbate problems about the limited range of materials in stock.

Overall, however, sixth-form college librarians tend to be struggling with much the same problems as their FE colleagues; the strategies and issues described below are relevant to both. Again, the main caveat is size, because there are usually fewer sixth-form college library staff available to take on the work (sometimes only one or no professional librarians) which reduces the scope for direct contact with teachers in areas such as assignment planning, joint delivery and student assessment.

5.3   The contribution made by the LRC/Library to the College

During the course of the project we encountered a series of commonly held views amongst teaching staff about the part played by the library and its staff in the life of the college. These views ranged from the stereotypical to the enlightened. Their importance in the present context is that the scope for librarians to actively engage in supporting teaching and learning will inevitably be limited or even proscribed by what the teaching staff think the library can do for the students – and for themselves.

➢ The most limited view regularly encountered was of the library as *a place from which students could retrieve specific information.* The emphasis here was on the student; it was no part of the thinking that the teachers should accompany the students – still less that they should check beforehand to find out whether the information assumed to be there was actually available. All college librarians can readily recall classic examples of undoable assignments set by absent teachers and most are skilled at second-guessing what a teacher may have had in mind when issuing vague directions to students.

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There are, of course, times when simply referring students to the library is an appropriate course of action, but when this deteriorates into one way telepathy or into laziness on the part of teachers (enshrined in the immortal acronym "FOFO") it is necessary to improve the situation *if any context for effective learning support is to be achieved.* The solution is easy in theory, but establishing and especially maintaining dialogue with teachers about student library use is a continuing problem for most librarians. Faced with the immediate concerns about being in the right place at the right time with the right student group and of ensuring that the curriculum is being properly covered, it is understandable if some teachers forget to talk to librarians about likely demands on their time and resources – understandable, but not professionally acceptable from the point of view of the librarian.

➢ Clearly, the library is **a place for students to go when not being taught.** Some of the most positive comments from teaching staff were about purposeful activity in the library or LRC, especially in the two colleges where a new LRC was opened after the start of the project. In practice, purposeful student actively usually took one of three forms:

- Using library computer facilities for a range of activities from word processing (where this was permitted) and Internet access to use of a variety of learning materials in electronic text, spreadsheet or other forms;

- Groupwork with other students in researching and conducting assignments;

- Individual private study using the library resources or bring in materials to do homework.

There is, of course, a temptation for students to treat the library as a common room or canteen but all of the libraries visited took a strong line against 'inappropriate' library use.

➢ Appropriate use of space is obviously a key element in **providing a purposeful environment where students can learn independently** and many college libraries are responding to these difficult types of use described above by creating separate areas for these purposes, primarily to create a quiet reading area and to control the noise associated with computer use. As courses delivery become increasingly modular and the needs of part-time students receive serious attention there are growing pressures to extend library opening hours in the evenings and at weekends, at least for limited homework and reference purposes.

However, a purposeful environment is not just about the arrangement or size of the library. Since no college library can accommodate all of the students and teaching staff at any one time, some colleges have moved towards timetabled access by classes or groups of students. Again, to ensure that students can get maximum value from the library, many libraries are offering introductions linked to course assignments rather than to the 'ritual tramp round' (or college induction) at the beginning of the first term (which is efficient from an administrative viewpoint but is ineffective for student orientation).

➢ Increasingly, colleges are coming to view the library as **a place to support learning through access to information.** There has been a marked expansion of ICT use in teaching and learning since the project began, partly as a result of the QUILT Programme organised by the Further Education Development Agency, but more so because of the rapid expansion of the Internet. Our previous report drew attention to a tendency for some colleges to invest in a heavily computer-based approach to 'resource-based learning' without addressing the key questions of equipping students with the information handling skills needed to make effective use of information technology.

Since then there has been growing evidence of more sophisticated approaches to ICT use through libraries (as described in our case studies) as well as of colleges taking student support in acquiring information skills more seriously. Several colleges are adopting intranet or extranet approaches to resource provision through their libraries. This can have the effect of positioning library services more centrally in the life of the college, but only if good communication links can be established with the teaching staff to ensure some level of

shared ownership of what is being provided. Two issues are the extent to which intranet-based resource development is seen as the province of the librarian or of the IT manager; and whether sufficient resources can be commanded by the library to take full advantage of IT by, for example, integrating student access to a wide range of learning resources (from Internet sites to CD-Roms, books and journals) through a common search tool.

The LRC contribution to teaching and learning in the college is not just about providing resources, however well organised:

➤ With the decline in the number of taught hours for students, the traditional role of the Librarian in dealing with **specific information problems** has taken on increased significance.

➤ Librarians have an important role in helping students to develop **the skills they need to find and use information**.

➤ They also have a key role in working with lecturers to address the increasingly complex information skills requirements of the 'Age of Information' by helping lecturers to enhance their own skills as well as collaborating in the design of assignments and course elements. At its best, this collaboration between librarians and teachers can make a real difference to the quality of the student learning experience, as reflected, for example, in improved student assignments.

5.4 Some issues in becoming more effective

All of the initiatives which formed the project case studies were based in an understanding of how the college operated, what the college was trying to achieve and what impact other factors such as structural, staffing and financial changes were likely to have. To this extent, each initiative was situation specific, but there were a number of recurring themes associated with success, several of which were highlighted in the internal and external evaluations of the initiatives. These elements were picked out and explored in the seminars and workshops as potential success factors, where their relevance was usually reinforced from the experience of achieving change described by the participants. The main success factors included:

➤ **ensuring that the basic service continues** (but what is it?) An interesting aspect of our work on achievement and impact indicators in the case study colleges was the recognition that some college librarians appear to have confused development planning and maintenance planning. Given the amount of work required to keep the library running efficiently and to respond to day-to-day demands it is apparent that any development activity will at best occupy spare capacity and otherwise require some sacrifice of efficiency in less important areas of service maintenance. A regular reaction from libraries when faced with this picture in our workshops and seminars was "We'll have to learn to say no". Unfortunately, saying no runs counter to the ethos of most college librarians, who share a strong commitment to providing services to people and who may also be concerned that refusing to help when asked might close doors to future collaboration. Nevertheless, our exploration of a wide range of initiatives aimed at supporting teaching and learning has convinced us that:

➤ **a clear focus for development is crucial**. Where the case study initiatives were successful, there had always been clear exposition at the outset of what was being attempted (even if the picture changed over time). This was important because it led to prioritization of development **and** maintenance activities and enabled college managers and teaching staff to share the vision, support the work and sometimes to adapt it to fit their own aims. The successful initiatives tended to support the contention from the educational literature that innovators should be willing to share or give up ownership of these ideas and to see them reinterpreted by other participants.

After the first cycle of college inspections following incorporation, the FEFC Inspectorate commented that college library development plans commonly took too little account of the resources available to enact the plans. Clarity of focus and realism about staff time and other resources should help ensure that plans are truly developmental and that they can work.

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The assertion here is that development planning should be based on spare capacity or reassignment of time – at least at the outset. We accept the view (frequently expressed in the educational change literature) that significant educational change is likely to take from three to five years to accomplish. It was notable that in at least two of the case study colleges, what had started out as 'spare capacity development' had gradually transformed the relationship of the library and its staff to the rest of the college to the point that early development had been institutionalised and become part of what was currently being maintained. The development focus had moved on to the next phase of change.

Even the smallest college libraries were able to take on some 'spare capacity' development; although when there were only one or two staff this might require the library to be closed at advertised times.

➢ *maintaining a distinction between information and knowledge.* Strategic educational planners and managers, from the current Prime Minister downwards, have occasionally slipped into a comfortable assumption that education can be transformed by ensuring increased student access to the Internet and other forms of electronic information by promoting ICT training for teachers and students alike. The real issues for educators are about how to help learners to make sense of the available information and to transform it into knowledge; hence the emphasis being placed on information problem-solving skills such as learning skills, library skills and study skills (or in the language of librarians – information skills).

Making it easier for students to gain access to information through intranets, extranets, subject-based gateways and other means is only part of the picture: supporting the students so that they can evolve into independent learners in the ICT age puts new demands on teachers in shifting to a learning support role and requires librarians to extend and enhance their user-helping repertoire more systematically and to build up their competence in facilitating group learning.

➢ *operating at strategic level.* One of the college librarians in the case studies, who has now achieved Head of Faculty status, summarised what is required to manoeuvre the library into a strategic position within the college into four concepts: positioning; proactivity; persistence and patience.

Positioning, in this context, means ensuring library representation on the main curriculum planning committees of the college and seizing any opportunities to get involved in college initiatives and into other areas of curriculum management. One case study librarian was seconded to a senior management job of planning the accommodation for a multi-site college which was regrouping on one site. Success in this role ensured her continued presence as part of the college senior management team.

Proactivity is likely to be college-specific, since each college has its own concerns and priorities. A good case study example of 'strategic proactivity' involved taking overall responsibility for the college Internet and educational IT programme and making this work so that the college is now a show-case for this type of work.

Persistence was personified in the Librarian visited early in the project who has been ejected from the college curriculum planning committee five times as a result of reorganisation or change of Principal, but who was busy manoeuvring his way back to the role. More generally, library development is seldom a smooth and painless process, case study libraries have been able to move forward despite major staff cuts, shifts in college priorities, difficulties over course funding and imposed changes in library manager roles.

Patience largely consists in being ready to wait for the opportunity to become proactive without creating undue resistance by trying to bounce people into change. This usually entails collaborating with other proactive manages on a shared agenda. An independent consultant at one of our seminars characterised the Librarians present as "True believers"

and suggested that they did not necessarily make the best advocates, hence the need for patience - or cunning!

➢ *impact information* – a particular focus of the case study work was on how to show that students' work in the LRC contributes to learning and adds value. Librarians in each of the case study colleges worked with the project team on impact and achievement indicators and targets aimed at telling the college whether the chosen initiative was making any difference to teaching and learning.

Our work on impact measurement for the project highlighted a number of points:

- None of the case study colleges and very few of those represented at our workshops and seminars had collected baseline information at the outset in relation to the areas in which they were hoping to achieve change. This prompts the question the college does not have information about, for example, new students' knowledge and experience of Internet searching, how can the library staff tell whether training offered in that area was having any effect? Baseline information is required as a basis for judging progress, but also to enable sensible impact indicators and targets to be set and achieved.

- Traditional performance indicators and targets (especially the process indicators favoured by most college libraries in their development plans) are useful in assessing the efficiency of the library as an operating system but tell very little about impact or achievement.

- Similarly, benchmarking of library services can be helpful in comparing the efficiency of the library as a system with other libraries or services, but again there is little to be gleaned through benchmarking about comparative impact and achievement.

- One reason why comparing the impact of libraries or services is difficult is that there are potentially a large number of contributory factors affecting any educational intervention, making it very difficult to establish direct causal relationships.

- Another problem in comparing service impact across libraries is that similar initiatives may be undertaken for different reasons and these reasons should be reflected in the choice of impact indicators. For example, if one college undertakes a programme of study skills delivery in order to clarify learning support roles following library reorganisation, the range of impact indicators will be different from those of a college library focused on helping to ensure first year student retention. There is likely to be some common ground around student progress but thereafter the indicators will diverge. It is only really possible to compare similar initiatives undertaken for common reasons.

- A balance between performance targets and impact targets is desirable to ensure that the library is looking at what they are doing **and** at the impact of this work on aspects of teaching and learning. The aim should be to choose the smallest number of appropriate targets possible to tell you what you need to know.

- Although it is difficult for librarians to gather some types of impact information, much potentially useful information (such as bibliographies compiled by student when conducting assignments, as a basis for tracking student competence in locating information sources) is routinely collected by teachers. Some of this information could be liberated if the right approach is made to the teacher early enough in the course.

- An important consideration is why the impact information is being collected. Some types of information may be particularly useful to library managers in taking decisions about whether to continue an initiative (is it working?) or how to deploy resources. Other types of information could have considerable impact on college senior management, such as evidence that the college has broaden its range of teaching and learning approaches with the support of the library.

For a more detailed consideration of impact measurement see Section B of this report.

➢ *Staffing: developing roles and skills*

In our project workshops we commented on the converging roles of librarians (in responding to specific information-seeking problems of students, or in running information skills sessions) and teachers (moving from the imparting of information to a learning facilitation mode of working). We also suggested that the future focus for librarians may be on teacher colleagues (such as supporting them in planning, delivering and assessing research-focused assignments) rather than on individual student problems which may in future be addressed by teachers in their tutorial role.

Such wholesale change may be a long time coming, but in the meantime librarians are likely to become more fully involved in information skills training and ICT delivery and support. These demands will require fostering of new skills, such as sophisticated electronic information searching and facilitating group learning.

➢ *Cross-college development*

As one of the major cross-college services the library is a potentially important locus for fostering college-wide educational initiatives. In recent years, a succession of national initiatives have washed onto the college shores, including GNVQs, open learning centres and distributed resource centres. All these initiatives carry some threat of marginalizing the library; they also offer potential opportunities for enhancing the role of the library within the college. Two recent openings of this sort are:

➢ *ICT applications in education.* Various approaches have been taken by the case study libraries in responding to the rapidly increasing deployment of ICT. One case study college seized the initiative and secured the main educational ICT development role for that college, including website design, resource acquisition and teacher support. Another case study college has concentrated on collaborative working with the ILT Department and has helped to spear-head a student study skills development programme through the collaboration. There have been many false downs in the short history of educational uses of IT but there are now strong signs that ICT advances are changing the ways in which students seek out information and are soon likely to have a major impact on how teachers teach and on how courses are delivered to students. College libraries cannot afford to neglect these changes and there is a specific threat that if college managers confuse information access and knowledge acquisition (see above) the role of the library could be seriously undermined.

➢ *Key skills development.* The key skills movement is now solidly established as a mandatory aspect of education and there is current discussion about key skills at 'A' level.

One case study college has chosen to open a new learning resource centre largely to support their core skills programme, which is nested in a series of subject-based 'pods' in the new centre. Another case study college has adopted a college-wide key skills strategy which is Department-driven but actively involves the Library through resource-based learning support (planned and delivered by Department staff in collaboration with librarians). Whether work in this area provides opportunities for librarians will partly depend upon how active they have been in information skills work and how well this work is viewed by the college. Joint working on this area requires active-co-operation and mutual professional respect between librarians and teachers, which has been fostered in some colleges through joint training, work-shadowing (both roles!) and pilot joint inputting of study skills elements into course programmes.

6   Reporting the Project findings

The remainder of this report is presented in modular form and is deliberately varied in its presentation and content, with some necessary repetition for different audiences. Rather than seeking to publish an *Effective college library – mark 2* report to follow on from the earlier FEDA

publication[4], we have prepared a series of reports aimed at different target groups. Our intention is to ensure publication of each of these reports in an appropriate form as indicated at the head of each module, subject to approval by the Library and Information Commission.

We feel that this approach will do much more to propagate the ideas emerging from the project than any amount of 'formal' project reporting. This view was strongly endorsed by the librarians, curriculum managers and teachers at all four of the seminars and workshops run as part of Phase two of the Project. As a result of representations from the college librarians, however, we also propose to produce complete sets of these publications (i.e. the content of the present report but presented differently) for distribution at cost to FE librarians. They have also asked for a Powerpoint-style presentation encapsulating the main project messages for lecturers and curriculum managers, to be prepared for use by librarians as a focus for in-service training with teaching colleagues.

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[4] STREATFIELD, D. R. and MARKLESS, S. *op.cit.*

Models of support for teaching and learning

Model A: Non-convergent resource provision

The essence of this model is responsiveness to student and staff needs offered by 'team players' with very good inter-personal skills. A central task is to act as the custodian and exploiter of a wide range of resources through liaison, talking to staff and high accessibility to staff and students. This model represents a sound survival strategy because the library will be clearly seen to be providing a useful service - but one that may be subjected to its share of pruning if the financial rains are below the seasonal average.

Model B: Opportunistic intervention

This is a proselytising mission, in which the librarian seeks to persuade senior management and the teaching staff of what can be achieved through an effective library (which they see only as *"a good thing"*). As a survival strategy this looks dubious because it is almost wholly dependent on the energy, personality and good luck of the librarian.

The essence of this approach is to find ways, any ways, of communicating a vision of what can be achieved through collaborative working to teaching colleagues, most of whom have never experienced an effective college library and many of whom regard the librarian as a member of the support staff rather than a professional colleague.

Model C: Strategic intervention

The basis of this mission is recognition that the core activities of the college are teaching and learning and that anything that is not judged to be central to these activities will be shunted to the periphery, where a different set of college values prevails, based on efficiency rather than effectiveness.

This situation requires librarians to ensure that they are involved in the major changes affecting the college and to turn potential threats into challenges. In turn this entails acknowledging that the rapid deployment of IT for educational purposes in colleges and the widespread investment in opening learning centres could both lead to the library being side-tracked, but that there is more than enough scope for librarians to become actively and centrally involved. The main library functions are likely to prosper with this model because the library will be seen to be relevant to the main college activities.

Model D: Skills-driven interventions

Implicit in this approach is recognition that librarians cannot simply go on dealing with more and more individual student problems as numbers increase and additional pressures are created by extension of the range of information available (such as the emergence of CD-ROMs and the Internet) and the shift towards various versions of 'flexible learning'. Librarians in education have traditionally taken an interest in the 'library skills' that students need and earlier reports for the British Library described how a number of colleges were coming to grips with information skills development (Markless and Streatfield: 1992; Chapman 1996).

The approach outlined here depends upon recognition by the college of the importance of systematic information skills enhancement (or problem-solving skills development as they are increasingly being called) as part of the student support strategy and of INSET in this area for college staff. In terms of survival of the library, this approach could be hazardous because it depends strongly on how serious the college *really* is about student skills enhancement.

Model E: Promoting resource-based learning

Three more or less distinct approaches to resource-based learning by colleges can be detected:

1.   Some colleges took steps a few years ago to provide systematic central support for student-centred learning as part of an overall strategy to offer a range of teaching and learning routes to a more diverse community of students, often as a response to the introduction of BTEC courses. In her study of learning centres, Valerie Bigford (1994) noted the variety that could be engendered within a single college which placed great emphasis on a learner-oriented approach to course delivery.

The pattern of evolution in many colleges has been from 'open-learning drop-in centres' which, according to David Bosworth (1995), grew up as a response to the perceived need to make maximum use of an array of expensive audio-visual equipment bought by the college. Then the emphasis shifted towards creating additional centres to support the 'flexible learning' elements of various college teaching programmes.

These systems have now matured to the point where there is a clear relationship between the library service functions and the learning centre functions. In some cases this has resulted in overlapping staffing and provision of library resources in the centres and in a few instances the entire operation is managed by a librarian (usually in the role of learning resources manager).

As a survival policy this version of the model is powerful because reaching this position has required senior management recognition of and support for this enhanced library/learning centre role and because it offers solutions to the pressing college management problem of unit costs.

2.   More recently the sheer pressures of student numbers and reduced taught hours have led many colleges to install IT-dominated learning centres featuring 'banks of computers'. In some instances these have been set up entirely separately (physically and managerially) from the library; elsewhere centres have been placed alongside the library or the library has been transformed into a learning centre on this model, with the role of the librarians described by one lecturer as *"purely a policing function"*. Where these changes have happened without careful consideration of the library role this has caused inevitable tensions.

3.   After the Phase one report was completed, it became evident that the dangers inherent in the finance-driven version of this model were being recognised by senior managers in at least a few of the colleges that were committed to this route. Attempts were being made to address the problems of student support and of managing the required changes in staff roles whilst these changes were being introduced.

Sample Interview schedules:

Evaluation of interventions by Librarians/LRC Staff to improve support for teaching and learning requires good quality instruments to gather people's views. We have brought together a set of interview schedules, all of which have been tested in the field, in the hope that Librarians or other interested College staff can adapt these for their own purposes.

A   Senior Management

I'd like to ask you some questions about teaching and learning at the college and about the part played by the LRC.

1.   What do you think are the two or three most important elements in supporting student learning at the college?

2.   What changes, if any, do you expect to see in how the curriculum is delivered at the college over the next few years?

2.1   What do you see as the pros and cons of these changes?

Prompt: Impact of ICT?

>   *Likely timescale for change?*

>   *Are you pushing for these changes or are they inevitable?*

3.   What part does the LRC [local terminology?] play in supporting teaching and learning in the college now?

4.   As you know, we are interested in your Information Learning Technology initiative and the part the LRC is playing. Could you say something about the ILT initiative?

4.1   Why do you think this is working? *Success factors*

5.   Do you think that the LRC role will change in future? How?

6.   Will any of the changes we have talked about make any new demands on students?

How will you help meet these demands?

7.   Do any of the changes you have mentioned have implications for staff training?

Teachers; Librarians?

8.   What do you think is the biggest challenge in supporting teaching and learning in the future?

B   Teaching staff

[Which is your Department?]

I'd like to ask you some questions about teaching and learning at the college and about the part played by the LRC.

1.   What do you think are the two or three most important elements in supporting student learning at the college?

2.   What changes, if any, do you expect to see in how the curriculum is delivered at the college over the next few years?

2.1   What do you see as the pros and cons of these changes?

Prompt: Impact of ICT?

       Likely timescale for change?

       Do you welcome these changes?

3.   What part does the LRC [local terminology?] play in supporting teaching and learning in your subject?

3.1   Have you worked with Library or LRC staff in the past? How?

3.2   Has the ILT development made any difference to how you work with them?

Pros and cons of working together? Perception of Library staff?

3.3   Has the ILT development added to what the college can offer students? How?

4.   Do you think that the LRC role will change in future? How?

5.   Will any of the changes we have discussed make any new demands on students?

How will you help meet these demands?

6.   Do any of the changes you have mentioned have implications for staff training?

Teachers; Librarians?

7.   What do you think is the biggest challenge in supporting teaching and learning in the future?

C   LRC staff

I'd like to ask you some questions about teaching and learning at the college and about the part played by the LRC.

1.   What do you think are the two or three most important elements in supporting student learning at the college?

2.   What changes, if any, do you expect to see in how the curriculum is delivered at the college over the next few years?

2.1   What do you see as the pros and cons of these changes?

Prompt: Impact of ICT?

       Likely timescale for change?

       Are you pushing for these changes or are they inevitable?

3.   What part does the LRC [local terminology?] play in supporting teaching and learning in the college now?

4.   Thinking about the ILT development :

4.1   Has the ILT development added to what the college can offer students? How?

4.2   What were the key factors in making it work?

4.3   Anything to avoid or overcome in making it work?

5.   Has the ILT development affected how you work with teaching staff?
        -       *time spent with them?*
        -       *things you ask them to do?*
        -       *things you do with them?*
        -       *future involvement? Next stage of involvement?*

6.   Do you think that the LRC role will change in future? How?

7.   Will any of the changes we have discussed make any new demands on students?

How will you help meet these demands?

8.   Do any of the changes you have mentioned have implications for staff training?

Teachers; Librarians?

9.   What do you think is the biggest challenge for the LRC in supporting teaching and learning in the future?

D   Students

[What studying?]

I'd like to ask you some questions about teaching and learning at the college and about the part played by the LRC.

1.   How often do you use the LRC?

Weekly; daily?

2.   What do you use it for?

Why do you come?
Group work?
Individual assignments?
Reading for the course?
Newspapers and magazines?
Use IT?

3.   What types of materials do you use?

CD-ROMs
Internet
Books
Magazines

How frequently?

4.   Thinking about the computers:

4.1   do you like using them? Why?

4.2   what do you use them for in your course?

Is it seamless?
CD-ROMs
Websites
Electronic publications
Library catalogue

4.3   How easy is it to find really useful information on the computer?

What difficulties?
What help do you ask for/get/need?

4.4   When you are away from the college at work or at home, do you ever use the Internet link to the college site to get at information? What for?

5.   What do you like about the LRC?

6.   What don't you like about the LRC?

7.   If you were here before the technology developments at the college, have they made any difference?

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PART B: Choosing Performance Indicators, Setting Targets and Enacting Development Plans

Developing performance and impact indicators and targets in public and education libraries

Sharon Markless and David Streatfield
[to be published in The International Journal of Information Management]

Lawrence Stenhouse on evaluation[5]:
"Let us keep hold of the idea that it is mostly a matter of common sense and learning from experience. That is not entirely true, but it keeps us from going technical and theological."

The idea of evaluating performance is heavily embedded in the UK education system at all levels through internal tests, external examinations and, more recently, through assessment at various ages in schools. The new inspection frameworks for schools, colleges and HE has required more rigorous collection of evidence as well as the demonstration of analytical judgements based on this evidence[6]. These efforts are being accompanied by Central Government attempts to create more consistent institutional management by requiring schools, colleges, HE institutions and now Local Education Authorities to produce development plans addressing prescribed issues.

Performance evaluation in public libraries has come strongly to the fore in the past year as a result of: the requirement to prepare annual library plans for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport; the growing involvement of public library authorities in the 'Best Value' initiative; various benchmarking and standards initiatives (e.g. CIPFA Books Plus); and the prospect of national standards being introduced by DCMS (coinciding with a growing Government interest in the role of public libraries in lifelong learning.

Until relatively recently, education libraries were seen as more or less incidental to the inspection and evaluation programmes in education institutions[7]. For example, the early Ofsted inspection weeks generated many anecdotes about the library being overlooked altogether or being subjected to random multiple visits. Similarly, the role of libraries in the curriculum tended to be underplayed in further and higher education, partly perhaps because the evidence of impact was not readily to hand. Our research into the role of school[8] and college[9] libraries in supporting teaching and learning revealed a growing interest in performance evaluation and this interest has burgeoned in the workshops that we have run for the Library Association and in the second phase of the Effective College Library project. We are now expanding this work in the public libraries sector through a Library and Information Commission-funded project.[10]

In building an approach to generating achievement or impact indicators and targets we have benefited from a great deal of work on related areas of performance measurement and standards

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[5] STENHOUSE, L. *Curriculum research and development in action* London: Heinemann 1975.

[6] See, for example: OFFICE FOR STA|NDARDS IN EDUCATION *School evaluation matters* London: OFSTED 1998.

[7] A shift in the HE sector was marked by the report to the HEFC Colleges Learning Resources Group by:
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[9] STREATFIELD, D. R. and MARKLESS, S. *The effective college library* British Library Research and Innovation Report 21 *Developing FE Series* 1 (8) London: Further Education Development Agency 1997. ISSN 1361 9969

[10] Information Management Associates, with David Haynes Associates, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Library Services and Wiltshire and Swindon Learning Resources *Best Value and Better Performance in Libraries* (ongoing).

setting (including work in education[11] and health libraries[12] and in other areas of education[13]) as well as new approaches, such as the European Foundation for Quality Management's *Business Excellence Model*, comparable experience in other countries[14]. The rapid growth of information technology in libraries creates a further layer of complexity in evaluating effective service delivery and its impact on users[15].

Process versus outcomes

A striking feature when looking at school, college, HE and public libraries is that they do not share the 'completion complex' that is associated with much educational evaluation. Although teachers are making some efforts to catch information about the routes taken by students in carrying out assignments (to help them understand better how students learn), the usual focus is on the essay or assignment report itself (the end product). In the world of examinations, mathematics is probably the only area in which there is as much interest in how the student arrived at the answer as in the answer itself.

The contrast with the world of libraries is almost complete. Instead of the 'completion complex', many libraries appear to be beset with an 'activity fixation'. Almost all the performance indicators and targets that we have seen for libraries judge success in terms of efficient resource provision, or on whether they have completed certain tasks or set up specific activities rather than whether their services have had a discernible effect on users.

When watching various colleges embark on innovations aimed at improving aspects of their support for teaching and learning, we were very struck by the near total absence of baseline data about how good their students were at handling information or using library facilities and resources. There was also very little attempt to see whether library use was reflected in the range of information presented by students in their assignment reports. Similarly, when working with the managers of a public library service, we had to halt at the point where they had decided what they wanted to do next so that they could go off and collect data to find out what effects they were already having. This was necessary if any meaningful targets were to be set.

More strikingly again, when we examined all 143 of last year's accepted annual [public] library plans to see what they had to say about the *National Year of Reading*[16] there was little attention to performance evaluation. Despite the emphasis on targets in the guidance for preparing these plans, only 20 authorities made reference to performance indicators or quantified targets in relation to the *Year* and, of these, 10 were confined to process indicators.[17]

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[11] e.g. the Library Association publications on standards; CONVENTION OF SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES *Standards for school library services in Scotland* COSLA 1999; BLOOR, I. G. *Performance indicators and decision support systems for libraries: a practical application of 'Keys to Success'* BLR Paper 93 BLRDD 1991; POLL, R. and BOCKORST, P. T. *Measuring quality: international guidelines for performance measurement in academic libraries* Bowker Saur 1996.

[12] e.g. TRINDER, V. M. *Accreditation of library and information services in the health sector: implementation guide and tool kit for libraries in NHS Trusts* LINC Health Panel 1998.

[13] FITZ-GIBBON, C. T. *Monitoring education: indicators, quality and effectiveness* London: Cassell 1996.

[14] Such as current LIC research by Anne Morris looking at 'US methodology applied to value and impact of UK libraries'.
The 'Third International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries' will be held at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle in August 1999.

[15] Currently being explored by a Manchester Metropolitan University team led by Peter Brophy in an LIC project on 'Value and impact of end-user IT services in Public Libraries'.

[16] *Evaluation of the role of Public Libraries in the National Year of Reading* currently being conducted for the Library and Information Commission and the National Literacy Trust by Information Management Associates.

[17] Although output or outcome targets appear to be the exception of the rule in public libraries this does not mean that there has been no work on quality measurement.

Why should teachers and librarians be so different in their evaluation emphases? We could hazard various suggestions based on the heavy emphasis placed by the education system as a whole on student performance in examinations. Although not all education institutions are exams-driven, the system as a whole places great emphasis there and this in turn is bound to influence teachers in preparing their students, which usually entails marking of work and recording the results. One effect of all this is that some performance information on all students is fairly readily available to be pressed into use.

The common denominator acknowledged by most librarians is a 'service ethic'. Given a choice, librarians would probably like to be judged on their ability to provide a wide range of freely available services to meet all likely needs and to measure their success in terms of quality of use. (This choice was to some extent available until recently because there were only limited external demands for target setting.) One effect of a lengthy period of cutbacks the public sector has been to raise questions about this whole approach. Nevertheless, our experience in working with librarians is that they find it difficult to prioritise amongst the services they would like to offer even when an open-ended commitment to service is unsustainable.

Creating development plans that work

Over the past two years we have worked with seven FE colleges to test a series of innovations aimed at supporting teaching and learning. We have adopted a common approach to generating performance indicators and targets for this work. This has enabled us to test this methodology, try out some performance indicators and evaluate the innovations within the same project. We have further advanced the methodology in various consultancy projects[18].

The approach we have constructed to the generation of performance indicators and targets has helped a number of librarians and education managers to get to grips with the fairly complex issues and choices involved. It has proved helpful in enabling librarians to engage in development planning from the right end – that is from specific time limited objectives forward to setting realistic and achievable targets.

Too often we have encountered development plans that start from the wrong end – a series of action areas for which arbitrary targets have been set which take little account of how these can be achieved. Not a few of the public library annual library plans lodged with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport have gone even further in the wrong direction by seeking to encompass everything that the library has to do (sometimes offering reams of documentation in the process). It is important to sustain a clear distinction between maintenance planning (across all fronts and judged on their efficiency) and development plans (which concentrate on key areas for improvement and look for signs that progress is being achieved).

A reasonable question at this stage might be 'Why do we need development plans?' In some cases there is a senior management or external imperative to produce plans. Development plans can also help to:

- identify and focus on key priorities
- sustain this focus into real development
- ensure that a professional approach is adopted
- provide a basis for review and evaluation
- demonstrate how the management aims to improve the service
- raise the profile of and promote the Library or Learning Resource Centre

- show where the library fits into the approach/ethos of the institution

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For example, Bob Usherwood has led a number of projects on assessing quality and social auditing, such as:
USHERWOOD, R. C., EVANS, M. and JONES, K. *Assessment tools for quality management in public libraries* BLR+I Report 155 1999.

[18] MARKLESS, S. and STREATFIELD, D. R. The really effective college library [in preparation]

- provide accountability.

Our approach to development planning is encapsulated in figure 1. Please look at the examples carefully before reading on.

For many organisations, the overall purpose or mission is written in such general and utopian terms as to have little substance. A few institutions have expressed their purposes in ways that help managers decide amongst options or ensure consistency of approach. For practical reasons we usually start our exploration of the issues at the next level down.

Choosing where to get involved

Our work with further education college libraries has pointed to three general areas in which they can become more effective in supporting teaching and learning:

- Enhancing the technology to support learning
- Teaching information skills
- Real collaboration:
    - small or large scale (team teaching to RBL projects)
    - outside the library
    - new roles/skills

Although there is some likely overlap amongst these areas, it has become increasingly clear that being effective requires choices to be made about how and where to get involved. The basic logistics of college life ensure that there will always be many teachers and still more students to every librarian. Moreover, both teachers and students will spend much of their time out of the reach of librarians – and the library has to be run! In such an environment, concerted efforts in areas of activity that look amenable to intervention (characterised in the educational change literature as "Going where the energy is"[19]) are likely to be much more effective than spreading time thinly across many initiatives. The basic constraint for librarians, that they have to spend much of their time on managing and operating the library infrastructure, means that most development work will have to be done 'at the margins', at least in the early stages of the work. One characteristic of successful initiatives is that they become part of the normal work over time ('the institutionalisation stage' in education changespeak); occasionally an initiative may lead to the library or learning resource centre operating differently, but this is unusual and is in any case likely to take around five years to achieve.

Impact versus performance

When you have decided where and how you want to move, it is usually fairly straightforward to decide on general indicators of whether or not you are getting there. That is where the easy part stops, however, because:

- there is a tendency for managers to confuse output performance indicators with the steps necessary to get there (what we have described as criteria below). For example, if your aim as an education librarian is to influence curriculum planning so that resources are consistently taken into account, getting onto the institutional curriculum committee may be an important step, but success in this does not itself indicate that you are succeeding.

- impact indicators (that is, evidence that something has resulted from the initial move) and, especially, achievement indicators (that is, evidence that what is done is having real effect) often create a headache for people who have to measure or assess whether these are being reached. Although libraries lend themselves readily to certain kinds of data collection, these statistics usually tell managers more about whether the library is working

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[19] A phrase employed by Michael Fullan, whose major book *The new meaning of educational change* 2nd. ed. Cassell: London 1991, provides a brilliant synthesis of the educational change research literature.

efficiently than about how well it is serving particular groups of people and what effect this is having. Social science research has been struggling with the issue of cause and effect for many years but it is still difficult to establish with any certainty that any particular outcome was the direct result of a specific intervention.

The practical response to this problem of evidence is to seek the best of what is available, by measuring what can be measured and systematically collecting the views of the people concerned about whether things are indeed moving or changing.

When we turn to assessing the impact of services, the engineering metaphor, from which the vocabulary of performance measurement and indicators is drawn, begins to break down. Although library inputs and outputs can be roughly equated to other systems and their products, this imagery will not stand up when we think about the effect of library services on student learning or on aspects of the lives of people in the community (what are loosely described as 'performance outcomes' in the efficiency-driven performance literature). Instead, we prefer to consider 'achievement' or 'impact' indicators and targets, since we are moving beyond 'mere performance'.

Our preference for relatively narrow definitions when describing performance indicators and targets is supported by the excellent short guide to '*Performance measurement in library and information services*' produced by Christine Abbott.[20] Throughout this work she scrupulously enacts a systems model of libraries and information sources, resisting any temptation to enter areas of educational interaction, such as study skills training (see p. 32 of that work).

What will help to realise your aims?

The educational performance indicators industry has tended to use the term 'criteria' to describe the processes that contribute to realising aims; 'actions' might be a more helpful (if potentially more ambiguous) term. There is serious decision-making required at this stage, since it is important to consider:

- whether there is an accepted way of doing what is intended within the institution (and what won't work locally)
- whether there are better ways of doing what is intended
- whether research evidence is available about what works and under which conditions

All the usual concerns about achieving change will come into play here, including the building of alliances, adoption of affordable approaches, persuading staff to support the venture, and so on.

Process performance indicators

Once you have decided what steps or actions to take it should be relatively easy to choose the indicators that will tell you whether you are making headway.

When it comes to choosing performance indicators (whether these are process, output or outcome indicators) there are a number of important characteristics to be taken into account.

According to the specialist writers in this field[21], good performance indicators should be:

- ❑ Relevant to accepted organisational goals
- ❑ Informative (giving warning signs, identifying achievements etc.)
- ❑ Able to be changed (provisional; since not all PIs will turn out to be helpful)
- ❑ Reliable

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[20] ABBOTT, C. *Performance measurement in library and information services* London: Aslib 1994.
[21] The characteristics outlined here are largely based on:
FITZ-GIBBON, C.T. *Monitoring education: indicators, quality and effectiveness* London: Cassell 1996.

- ❏ Valid (assess what they say they are assessing; this is probably more difficult than it seems – for example, examinations have been defined as 'testing the ability of the student to remember the notes of the teacher')
- ❏ Accessible/understandable
- ❏ Acceptable (seen to be fair; checkable)
- ❏ Not corruptible (that is, it should not be easy for an acceptable result to be reached without carrying out the intended actions)
- ❏ Not corrupting (that is, they should not provide an incentive to do disruptive or destructive actions, such as neglecting more able students in favour of cramming borderline people when exam results are chosen as an indicator)
- ❏ Cost-effective (the additional costs of collecting data are justified)

Further ground rules for employing performance indicators are:

- ❏ Use as few as possible – those chosen should be central to the activities of the service
- ❏ Some PIs should allow comparability (e.g. service over time; comparison with other services)
- ❏ Keep them flexible to reflect diversity and change
- ❏ Do not focus on one aspect of performance to the detriment of others
- ❏ Use as much readily available data as possible (including information routinely collected by teachers if you are an educational librarian)

… and please don't forget that professional judgement still matters!

Collecting data for target setting

It is necessary to decide what information is needed in order to be able judge whether success is being achieved against any indicator. This is a two-step process: it will first be necessary to review the available information (whether this is currently being collected for performance measurement or other purposes) and to decide how good this is for your purpose. Then it will probably be necessary to gather some other baseline data about the areas covered by your impact indicators. In education settings this is likely to include information that teachers are already collecting or can readily collect about student performance. Examples here might include the range of sources cited in student assignments or student ability to generate appropriate search terms.

Our experience is that gathering of additional information is almost always necessary in library settings, probably because librarians have not habitually been expected to demonstrate what kind of impact their services have on student learning, the quality of life of service users, or whatever.

We have already argued that the organisational climate around evaluation of library services is changing. One way to express this change is to assert that in the delicate balance between the costs (in time, energy, resources and money) of getting information versus the costs (penalties) of not doing so, the costs of not having adequate information about key aspects of library performance have increased significantly. This is hardly surprising since UK central government action over the past twenty years has dramatically tilted this balance in the whole of the public sector.

Setting targets

When adequate performance information has been assembled it is again a relatively straightforward step to select targets in relation to your aims. As usual, we will qualify this statement:

1.   A mixture of process and impact targets should be used:

Process targets are intended to make changes in what people do. Examples include:, 'review opening hours', 'reorganise library layout', 'increase the extent of support for students doing assignments' or 'enhance the strategic role of the LRC within the college' (e.g. by improving the position of head of LRC in relation to decision making bodies, or making input into academic

planning). It is usual to see development plans bristling with process items. Process targets are important things to think about and prioritise. However, processes can be changed radically without leading to real differences in the impact of services.

Impact targets are aimed at improving the quality of the service; they are focussed on real achievements. Examples in an education context are: 'improved quality and type of communication between learners and LRC staff' (different relationships; different approaches to staff); or 'enhanced user confidence' (increasing confidence in searching; greater awareness of the usefulness of the range of resources offered).

Notice that impact targets can be concerned with the whole community or parts of it.

Impact targets lend themselves to more precise quantification than process targets but it would be a mistake to see them all in terms of numbers. Libraries can aspire to broaden people's view of the world or to generate a love of books. However, the library managers will still have to decide how they will know when they are achieving success.

2   Failure will result if too many impact targets are adopted at the same time, because this will lead to confusion rather than concentrated effort. Each impact target will necessarily drag a raft of process targets along in its wake.

3   When setting targets it may be helpful to consider target zones. A recent study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (1997)[22] summed up the idea of target zones clearly:

> *The historic zone*   Targets in this zone are those which are **behind** current performance, which is hidden to the extent that others are not aware of its quality. By this means, standstill can be represented as improvement – it is a means of 'domesticating' any threats that targets may offer.

> *The comfort zone*   Targets in this zone seek to keep improvement very much within reach. They often reflect a belief that there is really no need to improve.

> *The smart zone*   Targets in this zone are sufficiently ahead of the present state of play to make a difference.

> *The unlikely zone*   Targets in this zone seek large improvements through 'determination and high aspiration, or recklessness.' They can be a recipe for high risk and high stress.

It needs no guesswork to arrive at which of these zones is the ideal, although in practice institutions show very different aspirations in their target setting.

One other dimension to be noted is the relative stability of performance indicators when compared to targets within a development plan:

> Performance indicators are relatively stable – they only change if:
>
>> - your aims change
>> - your processes change
>> - they are found unsatisfactory
>> (all Pls are provisional; they are difficult to get right first time).

> Targets move on as you move on (they are likely to change annually).

It may be a little disingenuous to claim that once you have been through this process the development plan writes itself. However, we contend that it should now be a much less difficult

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[22] BERKSHIRE EDUCATION AUTHORITY/ NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH *Target setting for school improvement* Slough: NFER 1997

task to express the initial aims and processes as time-limited and specific objectives linked to realistic targets, and to be confident of knowing when you have achieved what you set out to do.

A question which is frequently asked is whether this process model offers a good basis for benchmarking with other libraries or organisations in other sectors. Our work with the seven FE colleges has shown that even when college libraries are doing roughly the same things (for example, designing and delivering information study skills modules for students jointly with teaching staff) their aims and targets may well be different (such as learning about the job specifications for study skills support staff in a not yet opened learning resource centre or promoting resource-based learning using library resources, to pursue the same example). Although it is likely that another college library with similar aims and targets would be able to benchmark successfully with the latter college in the example just given, it would be dangerous to assume that other people's performance indicators automatically have relevance for you.

We are conscious that in outlining our process model for creating performance indicators and targets we have assumed a particular stance, that of library managers seeking to improve aspects of the work and to gauge success for their own purposes.

Questions such as:

>   Why is the evaluation required?
>   (for whom? to enhance effectiveness; to increase value for money; to justify expenditure; as feedback for development?)
>
>   who should evaluate?
>   (in order to avoid suspicion; to obtain co-operation; to achieve different perspectives)
>
>   what aspects should be evaluated?
>   (different levels; objectives set at each level)
>
>   when should evaluation be done?
>
>   What kinds of measurement will be used?

should all be considered when undertaking evaluation, but we have only really addressed the last of these here, and not in depth. What we have offered here is an approach which we have tested in various research and consultancy contexts, notably in phase 2 of *the Effective College Library* project[23] where the research design was based on this model.

Where will we all be going next as the world of evaluation advances? We will conclude by offering one version of the present and immediate future:

>   *"The evaluation agenda has expanded… from an initial focus on student learning outcomes to the study of cases… as a better way of understanding the problems and effects of change. Evaluators have become the storytellers and theorists of innovation… Evaluation is an interrogative activity intended to yield useful knowledge about social action.")*[24]

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[23] *op. cit. x*

[24] KUSHNER, S. and MacDONALD, B .'The limitations of programme evaluation' *in* MURPHY, R. and TORRANCE, H. *Evaluating education: issues and methods* London: Paul Chapman 1987.

Figure 1: Developing Performance and Impact Indicators

Overall purpose/ mission

e.g.
* effective support for the curriculum
* enrich student experience

Aims

e.g.
* to enhance students' research skills
* to systematically support curriculum development

Impact/achievement indicators

e.g.
* students locate information independently
* use of the library integrated into subject schemes of work

Criteria: processes that contribute to realising the aims

e.g
* liaising with teachers/tutors
* designing and running INSET
* acquiring differentiated resources
* teaching information skills courses

Process Performance indicators

e.g.
* curriculum development meetings attended
* % of staff attending library INSET workshop
* GNVQ information skills course designed

Collect data to ascertain where you are now

Set targets

Development Plan

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PART C: Effective Support for Teaching and Learning: Case Studies

Participants in our seminars and workshops will be aware that we have experimented with pared-down presentations of the main project case studies in our seminars and workshops. We have found that these are effective in helping participants to come to grips with the ideas and to apply the case study experience to their own situations. Accordingly, we have adopted a similar approach in presenting the main case studies here. Each presentation consists of a brief outline of the initiative and its context, followed by commentary drawn from our interviews with the key players in the college (managers, lecturers, library staff and students).

A few generalisations from across all of our case studies are presented in Part D below.

Case study 1: Cambridge Regional College: Technology-focussed initiative

Context:
This is a large regional College which largely moved into a new out-of-town site in the early 90s. The LRC is on two floors, and accommodates a range of study patterns (individuals, groups, silent area).

The student population all have to travel to the college. They are widely scattered, with lots of part-timers – leading to an issue of access.

The LRC Manager achieved a credible strategic position in the College after years of work, building from a low base (of no Librarian in post). The LRC is now well used across the curriculum and is embedded in the curriculum through the School of Information and Learning Development, which includes LRC, ILCT, Key Skills and Flexible Learning and is directed by the LRC Manager.

In common with most other FE institutions, the College has suffered huge cuts and reduced taught hours.

Initiative:
To develop a totally integrated electronic gateway to a wide range of materials (on site and remote). Key issues for the Library (and College) are how to enhance student access and participation (issues of inclusion). The technology seemed to offer possibilities that would enhance learning:

➢ The LRC Manager argued for the LRC to be at the centre of College technological developments to ensure that they were ***curriculum***-driven and focussed on access to learning, not technology-driven. She believes that Librarians should use their skills to add value to information available through ILT. "Librarians must stake a claim" or else they might become "marginalised".

➢ The LRC made a successful bid (against external competition) to develop the College web pages (prospectus/course information etc.). Success here brought them into contact with all departments – talking about information. A lot of emphasis was put on the time saved, automatic upgrading etc.

➢ They moved onto working ***with*** Heritage (Library Management System) to develop the integrated gateway to resources. They were able to embed WWW links into the OPAC (Library catalogue) creating a 'one-stop shop' for students. (A keyword search will provide ***direct*** access to CD-ROMs, WWW sites, electronic full text journals and location of library books, without the need to migrate between functions.) All this is offered on an Extranet and is password protected so that students can gain access to information from home, work etc. Lecturer materials are also being incorporated. It took 1.6 people working for 1.5 terms to create the system and get it running. (There is no Internet access in the IT suites, which are IT curriculum focused.)

➤ Library staff had to become technologically competent and knowledgeable. The senior librarian responsible for the initiative had no background in information technology. He built up his considerable expertise in response to immediate curriculum needs and worked with the library management system suppliers to solve any problems that arose.

➤ New participative materials are being added from other web sites (e.g. dynamic physics experiments).

➤ Supportive discussion groups for part-time students are also emerging.

➤ The programme was *not* funded out of national development money; this has had the advantage of ensuring greater sustainability.

➤ There was an initial sustained focus on staff development to engage lecturers with the possibilities presented by the technology, rather than on inducting students who "are finding ways in".

Aims and outcomes:

➤ Technology to become invisible: the focus is on student learning
➤ Change ILT from a production tool to an information management tool and to enable learning
➤ Add value to teaching and learning, not replace traditional models
➤ Student use can be monitored since they log on to internet machines in the LRC
➤ It works!

Note:
An account of the progress at Cambridge Regional College can be found in:
RAVEN, Debby 'Top marks for college' *Library Association Record* 101 (4) April 1999, 216-7.

Case study 1 : Commentary

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1   Developing the initiative

The LRC Manager stressed the continuing need for 'the four Ps'

- persistence
- positioning
- proactivity
- patience

in making long term progress.

The LRC approach had started from what libraries can do with ICT to add value and add to the student learning experience (this was linked to college concern with inclusion issues). The overall approach is focused on how access is provided to students, what they can obtain and where access to the service can be provided; that is an enabling approach using ICT rather than a technology-driven approach.

Initially, the LRC team concentrated on college-wide work to make an impact and provide a case to senior management for going forward. This focused on the college web pages, featuring the college prospectus with course information, inevitably affecting all Departments. This was made cost-effective by ensuring that if Departments put new information on their database this would automatically update the web pages, thus saving time and money.

2   Running the initiative

A web-based extranet rather than intranet approach was adopted in order to support distance learning and help part-time students, who can gain access to the system from their home or office using a password. FENC materials are being put on that system and the team is working on integrating electronic full text journals (at the moment these require a separate search tool). They are encouraging lecturers to put their lecture notes and other materials onto the net for students but there is some resistance to this. They are also working on interactive materials by importing good material from other websites. Discussion groups are being set up for students to enable them to provide mutual help and support.

Students are responding well to the keyword-based access to library materials and other resources, but some lecturers dislike being unable to skim contents pages of journals. The approach is sometimes viewed as over-centralised (providing "too much coherence" to the long term detriment of students faced with more chaotic information provision when they move on to work) but it seems likely that 'one-stop shops' will become more prevalent in many areas of work before long.

Both the qualified and non-qualified LRC staff have split functional/subject roles. The main disadvantage of this method of operating are that the technology overheads are necessarily high and that substantial strain is placed on IT network management at the college.

The Principal pointed out that:

"The LRC is the first thing student see when they come into the college. Learning activity and support is presented to students from the outset. The Director of Teaching and Learning (and LRC Manager) has clear responsibilities for these areas. This gives out a very important message to staff and students about the college focus on teaching and learning."

She also anticipated that "How teachers prepare materials and the kinds of materials used by teachers will change a lot, with the move from paper-based to electronic materials". She saw this as "a real opportunity for teachers to maintain and develop their own learning: and to redefine the respective roles of the lecturer, student and LRC; but it requires time to do learning and make change. There is a real problem to find the time; we have not seen the benefits of technology in reducing workload, therefore we are just doing more and more. At least the LRC provides a service to support the staff".

3   Assessing the initiative

A librarian from one of the other colleges participating in the project made the following comments after visiting Cambridge Regional College:

♦   LRCs are completely embedded in the curriculum through the School of Information and Learning Development
♦   Website is managed by LRC from an information/knowledge management perspective
♦   ILCT is being seamlessly integrated with existing user education
♦   Project development is cross-curricular: ILCT is being embedded in all learning – full-time, part-time and flexible
♦   Digital delivery will enhance rather than replace traditional forms of learning
♦   MIS use is good
♦   Holding back from ICT development is not an option if Libraries/LRCs are to retain pivotal role. ILCT is essential in context on national initiatives – Ufl, National Grid for Learning
♦   Any model for a technology based solution is limited by institutionally-restricted factors.

4   Impact of the initiative

4.1   One teacher's perspective

One Programme Manager had found working with the LRC team particularly rewarding:

"The LRC has developed a new role in helping teaching staff to enhance their technological competence to enable them to offer full-cost courses outside the college."

A subject librarian ran the first workshop introducing the Internet; this was observed by a Head of Department and other staff, who went on from there; workshops are now offered by that Department for full cost groups of ten and a lot of money is attracted!

"This type of tuition is continuing. The LRC made the initial approach, asking "How can we be much more proactive with you?". As a result, department staff are now doing various workshops. They could not have done this without LRC staff and it is an important source of income to the School."

4.2   LRC staff perspective

As a result of the new system, the LRC is more active in supporting learning, there is more independent study in the LRC with IT support to hand, and the quality of the relationships with students has improved, in the judgement of LRC staff interviewed. The development is timely because of changes in FE which are leading to more remote learning (via the Internet); more part-time and adult students and hence more independent study, coupled with reduced access to teaching staff. This in turn is leading to LRC staff being more on 'the front line': where they encounter the frustrations of students. The new system attracts people to the College, especially business; offers e-mail links to enable staff to do research; and has led to a higher level of proactivity between LRC staff and schools "we go to them; attending meetings; finding appropriate web sites for assignments; looking forward rather than reacting when students come in!"

The LRC now has higher profile therefore staff are reported to be more committed to their work.

"ILT provides a more flexible and wider range of resources; it is easier to be proactive because we are likely to find useful material for staff" in the view of the same LRC staff.

Clearly the ICT focus made demands on all users, especially the teaching staff who will have to acquire new skills, and older part-time students. The response from the LRC is to offer help with more inductions and workshops and to provide extra staff for individual IT support, as well as regular updates through an Internet Club.

The LRC staff in turn recognised that they need extra courses in computer literacy; the Internet; technology skills, as well as more guidance on liaison with departments and how to do it; the parameters of their role; and the curriculum and its enhancement.

They saw their main challenges for the future as tracking down resources; keeping a purposeful environment/ethos in a big LRC space; and overwork because of increasing demands and a broadening of their roles.

4.3   Student perceptions

According to students interviewed, the LRC offers good services (including inter-library loans) and quick responses; good help through qualified librarians; and a professional response.

The HE students interviewed would welcome a dedicated area for them within the LRC; with free access to IT; and "course books in one place, not all over the place because of the cataloguing system."

These students were divided about how they used the LRC: some were more likely to use the LRC site from home or from their department than directly because of the hassle of booking machines in the LRC; others did not use the catalogue from home "because you only have to come in and get the information anyway".

4.4 Managerial views

The Principal was in no doubt that the "LRC plays a vital part and visible part in supporting teaching and learning, and working in an integrated way. It is not a substitute for teaching nor aiming to de-skill teachers, but aiming to create a different sort of triangle. Student evaluations are positive: the whole range of resources add to learning, information and advice, guidance and resources".

"A lot of ILCT work has gone on here (open learning, website development, Internet access) and Heads of School have learned how different Schools can customise ILCT to suit their own needs, their own students. Not 'add on' ILCT, but starting from curriculum learning and work with teachers: producing bespoke solutions to curriculum issues.

The LRC staff have the technological expertise to provide solutions to curriculum problems, brought by academic staff (not to provide technology for the sake of it)."

She thought the initiative was succeeding because of:

♦ the strategic positioning of the LRC; the college had to make the decision that LRC is essential to learning and that independent learners are at the heart of the curriculum.

♦ the enthusiasm and ability of LRC staff

♦ the attitude of teaching staff: not looking down on Librarians

♦ the pace of the change: not pushing ahead so quickly that staff and students are left behind

♦ a genuine respect for all aspects of learning

Reviewing the changes made, she concluded that:

"At the outset the change happened serendipitously: the design of the building preceded any articulation of a curriculum philosophy. The role continued to be enhanced and the outreach service grew on a technological basis."

A curriculum manager commented particularly on the effects of the initiative on older students:

"students are able to do a search of the library catalogue from home – this gives: flexibility and access; it opened things up. There are lots of barriers to learning for adults; they are less intimidated by IT (it does not seem 'academic');

The LRC itself was seen as:

"A major facility for investigative work and it offers physical resources (it is used as a working environment); there are staff there to support students finding material; some adults use it as quiet space for reading."

Finally, here is a comment from a Head of School who was asked what were the important elements in supporting student learning. His reply is important in putting the initiative in context:

♦ "Tutorials and other pastoral support;

♦ A range of different and high quality resources;

♦ Effective timetabling (flexible and adaptable)."

5   Introducing the approach elsewhere

Some considerations for anyone contemplating a similar venture are:

♦ The information retrieval side of this project is inextricably linked to Heritage Library Management System
♦ A high level of ILCT expertise is required by LRC staff
♦ Excellent formal/informal links with IT Network Management are required
♦ ILCT/RBL must be marketed to curriculum delivery staff as an opportunity, and not a threat
♦ Cross-curricular support/enthusiasm is essential
♦ Senior Management Team support is essential

Case study 1: APPENDIX A

Draft Performance Indicators for Cambridge Regional College

Outcome PIs

1   **Proportion of students using resources** (Is there evidence of increasing student participation?)

2   **Communication between learners and staff** (Is there evidence of improving quality of communication? Different types of communication? Formal and informal channels?)

3   **Efficiency of searches** (Is there evidence of more efficient and successful searching e.g. wider range of resources found; appropriate material?)

4   **User attitudes** (Is there evidence of increased student confidence in their ability to deal with resources? Is the LRC increasingly seen as relevant, useful and credible by staff and students?)

5   **Quality of student assignments** (Is there evidence of students' work containing higher quality information etc?)

Process PIs

6   Access provided to a wider range of information

7   Take up of staff development (LRC and academic)

8   Flexible means of communication provided

9   Extent of support for students doing assignments (Is there evidence of a good focus on briefing, skill developing etc.)

10   Proportion of time students spend using curriculum-related information resources

11   Strategic role of the LRC within the college
(Position of head of LRC in relation to decision making bodies; ability of Head of LRC to influence strategic planning; input into academic planning)

12   Curriculum-based collaboration between LRC and academic staff (Is there evidence of the collaborative development of assignments/ materials? What contributions are LRC staff making within Curriculum Development teams?)

"More people call it the LRC rather than the library – you can tell a lot about people from what they call it. The LRC is more than just books – an accessing information centre."

Head of Faculty

Context:

This is a large single-site College, set in 'leafy Metropolitan suburbs' but attracting increasing numbers of Inner-city, multi-ethnic students. They have some HE provision (they tried to expand HE provision but this was blocked). There have been severe cuts and large-scale redundancies, revised contracts and restructuring over the past three years under a new Principal. They have a new, well-designed LRC.

Initiative:

Cuts in contact hours and staff reductions combined with increased concern over retention made the senior management focus on resource-based learning as a response. Key features:

➢ each subject area is required to plan (using a prescribed format) and undertake an RBL element to their courses
➢ the approach is not IT-driven (hence RBL could entail use of more traditional resources)
➢ use of project teams to develop RBL (including teaching staff, faculty librarians and learning development staff)
➢ time is provided for work on RBL through self-managed staff development days (written into the contract of employment of each member of academic staff)
➢ purchase of LRC resources is directly linked to RBL projects (they previously used formula–based allocation)

Policy for Resource-based learning: (edited version of college document)

A definition for RBL:
RBL is a method of flexible learning which allows students, with guidance:
♦ to study effectively outside a classroom
♦ to effectively use learning media most suited to their individual need
♦ to learn at their individual pace
♦ to use the resources of a Learning Resources Centre and other learning environments effectively

The benefits of RBL are:
♦ its capacity to provide additional learning opportunities for students
♦ lecturers can focus on facilitating learning rather than imparting information
♦ its potential to create additional income

The effective uses of RBL are as a:
♦ key part of learning programmes
♦ method of delivery that supports the development of skills and encourages effective independent learning
♦ means of providing information in a readily accessible form that is relevant to the programme.

Outcomes:
RBL Action Plan Current Year Objectives

Strategic management
1. to communicate a vision for RBL development at Nescot
2. to review existing RBL development and to identify areas for further development
3. to develop a Departmental RBL Plan
4. to establish links and monitoring frameworks for achievement of RBL Plan using contractual self-managed staff development days.

College structure
1. to identify a member of senior management to speak on behalf of RBL issues
2. to utilise management structures to communicate a vision for RBL development

Curriculum
1. to share good practice in the deployment of RBL methods
2. to identify RBL project groups to achieve priorities identified in the Department RBL Plan

Student support
1. to equip students with the skills to use RBL resources effectively

Staff development
1. to equip staff with the skills and facilities to produce and support RBL effectively.

Information technology
1. to apply IT appropriately as part of RBL development where is enhances to learning process
2. to distribute RBL resources to students efficiently using IT.

Resources
1. to provide resources that enable staff and students to use RBL materials easily and effectively
2. to allocate available RBL budget efficiently to support effective RBL development proposals.

Quality
1. to evaluate RBL activity undertaken from 1997/1998 plan
2. to establish SMART objectives for all RBL Project work
3. to establish a quality assessment scheme for delivery of RBL to complement Lesson Observation.

Outcomes:

➢ still emerging
➢ closer liaison between LRC and curriculum staff (beginning to shift from discussing resources to discussing the curriculum)
➢ much stronger relationship between resources and the curriculum (new resources are better used)
➢ well-received staff development on resources for specific subjects
➢ senior management commitment has limited the scale of LRC cuts

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- there is more purposeful student activity in the new LRC
- an observation schedule has been developed to focus on learning in the library
- very variable output from different RBL groups
- benefits so far have been in the processes more than the new RBL products
- a new Managing Information award has since been piloted at levels 2 and 3, focused on electronic information sources..

Case study 2: Commentary

"You can easily develop the library independently and no one seems to mind that: It is up to the library to make it relevant".   (Head of Learning Resources)

1   Context of the change

A Head of Department stressed that:

"It is important that RBL is seen as embedded and not an added extra, as purely an economy measure. Financial reduction is a reality, so staff may not see the educational benefits of RBL even though they want to do the best for students. Staff are overburdened and pressured... there is still a barrier of RBL being seen as the eighth extra thing that they have to do: we need to demonstrate the value of RBL to staff (if staff do not value it, the students will not do it).

"We are still in the culture shift from teaching to learning and deciding what to retain; it must be supported and structured and not all about IT."

At the outset the new Principal was very active across all initiatives and "doing a lot of work: meeting targets for the first time ever; getting numbers up; and we achieved Investors in People. There was a huge consultation over the new strategic plan. The LRC team was waiting for things to settle down but staff have been sacked, salaries cut and the LRC has had to restructure again and make savings."

2   Introducing the initiative

This project has involved a large period of change. At the outset, according to a Department Head, the initiative was led by "a group of men taking a rigid IT-based approach".

Links were established between librarians and faculties, with the Librarian included as a member of faculty boards, validation panels, etc. but with his expertise undervalued. This project was a first attempt to tie Learning Resources into what was happening in the mainstream of the college.

In response to the introduction of GNVQs and the emphasis on key skills, LRC staff wrote a college internal policy, mapping resources to key skills competencies and they helped set up Learning Workshops.

A new RBL group started in 1999, involving someone from every Department. This was characterised by "tightly chaired meetings with proper agendas. Success in this group has been achieved through an open-minded, listening approach by the RBL Manager: "… He facilitates – pulls out the best in people".

The earlier group was bigger "but that was right – consciousness raising, now we are more focused. There are no short cuts to consciousness raising".

There was some continuing resistance to RBL by lecturers who saw it as not being taken seriously at national level and hence unlikely to be properly funded ("If the Association of

Colleges isn't prepared to talk about hours it is not serious about effective delivery of education.")
It was argued that:

"RBL is not suitable on a college basis – it needs to be done regionally or nationally." This conclusion was based on the high costs of producing good quality independent learning materials (including CD-ROMs and videos). Even so, this lecturer saw RBL as the eventual way forward:

"We need to look at the whole picture: delivering in classrooms won't work for much longer; we need RBL - but personalised." He saw serious issues over changing the funding mechanisms, use of space, booking and tracking people (a real issue) and changing time-tabling systems away from those based on the term or semester.

A department head provided another cautious view of RBL:

"If it is seen as a panacea for all ills this is bad news – we are suspicious of management targets (10% delivered by…) nonsense. Managers have to realise that staff need training/development: channelling three days of self-managed time was really important. We need to realise that RBL doesn't come cheap; staff time is needed. This approach needs development, thinking rather than the manager seeing it as an easy way out. It is easy to spend money badly on materials (e.g. CD-ROMs). We need to know what we are looking for. It is expensive too for staff to develop materials [the ratio of preparation time to delivery time if paper based is 5 up to 10 – 1; it is 20-1 if electronic; 100-1 if multimedia]."

3   Delivering the initiative

RBL represents a shift in emphasis, including both realignment of time and resources and emphasis on supported learning outside the classroom, rather than a wholly new approach.

Success in making this approach work was seen by a Departmental Head as depending upon:

- Winning staff over: "convincing staff of the value of RBL - use achievable projects with an immediate pay off";

- Appropriate resourcing: "Time is needed; in NESCOT we used self-managed staff development days; supporting the skills development needed, such as IT".

One of the LRC team said "It has not really taken off yet – it was going well but a new staff structure was proposed last year, so much never actually happened. RBL is being relaunched heavily this year with support from the SMT and governors – and with management backing.

A landmark for the Head of Learning Resources was when he went to a Curriculum Area Managers meeting and they began talking about using self-managed staff development days for RBL.

There was significant teaching staff resistance to the change because "if we do all this, we will work ourselves out of a job. Basically the job hasn't changed in the last couple of thousand years". This attitude was hardened by additional work pressures, including "the introduction of shorter taught hours, increased workloads, more marketing and reorganisation", and there was initial resistance to using information technology. A lecturer commented that "Education systems are at a point where some of the load should be taken off; we should be thinking about this nationally. Education is losing sight of what we are trying to do because of concern to prove certain things".

Unsurprisingly, not everyone believed in the benefits of ICT, "The price of computer-supported learning is horrendously expensive, for site licenses. In business and management the materials are produced to be sold into companies, making them very expensive".

It was noted that "Keeping work packs up to date is expensive (even when work is conducted to a five-year cycle, dedicated to this). Some areas such as maths, history, basic engineering – don't

change much – the payback is longevity. As you go up the 'skills chain' it becomes more fragmented, difficult to address".

"Although lots of processes are going on; there is not enough product yet", according to the Head of Learning Resources, "because the chosen approach enables staff to do things in Departments, making their own decisions. Management judges by product, so there is a need for some products, even if the process is very valuable."

It was expected that there would be more finished materials during 1999 – but that they would get into problems about copyright. They have done basic staff development in writing materials; the next tasks are to revisit this and move on to web-page design.

The aim is to integrate RBL into IT based learning in the current round of activity, using the staff entitlement to IT development (in the new Strategic Plan). This had not yet begun.

A department head wanted to see expansion of the learning centre idea:

"I would like to see the development of a departmental resource base for students to access in one place; staffed by a vocational tutor and support staff (on the Business Centre model) with students timetabled in there, not for traditional delivery but for supported learning."

4   Impact of the initiative

4.1   Impact on students

A subject librarian averred that "students were more confident in working with library staff " as a result of the initiative. According to him, staff reported variable changes in student use of information sources; "good students perform much the same; average students improve; whilst with poor students it is difficult to get much response anyway". One of the Department Heads saw tangible benefits for students in developing independent learning skills, and other gains seen were in student confidence when using resources, in retaining more of what they had learnt "because they did the work themselves" and growing student recognition that RBL was part of their learning programme. Indirect benefits came to students through "much more staff awareness of the widening participation agenda – more flexible modes of attendance. Saturday morning workshops; stuff set up for use when they can". However, "if there is to be more RBL the students need help in learning how to deal with it… not all students are brilliant on the Internet".

A Department Head saw RBL, supported by an effective LRC, as leading to more creativity in the classroom, with more interesting group work and benefits to teaching and to the variety of task. "We are doing things not thought of three years ago – the interview has made me reflect; I can see how far we have progressed".

Another lecturer distinguished between two categories of students:

"If they are straight from school – we gradually introduce RBL, weaning them away from traditional teaching; if they are adult students – don't over-estimate their confidence and ability to work independently."

4.2   Impact on teaching staff

It was forecast by a subject librarian that "by next year some teams will be doing constant RBL" but this is well beyond the senior management target of delivering 10% of the curriculum by this means. A Department Head who strongly advocated RBL, nevertheless regretted that less contact and larger classes would lead to "RBL whether we like it or not".

Key messages emerging about how to take RBL forward with staff included:

"Be careful about how sell it to staff – there is a feeling that it will put them out of a job. Emphasise that it is not designed to reduce class contact further but to enable them to maintain what is important to them in less contact time. RBL can help tackle student in discipline when

they only have limited contact time. RBL offers a fall back if students are sick. Teachers can use it to deliver stuff they are 'fed up off' – make one big effort and put it into RBL."

"Don't assume that RBL releases staff to do other things, such as teaching more students. It is no cheaper than traditional ways of operating. RBL is a different way of doing it not a cheaper way: you can focus in on student gaps and difficulties; but you have to keep on top of the students – it saves classroom time but not teacher time."

"RBL project time is time for staff to work together on the curriculum (before this was at every administration meeting)!"

"RBL is a great idea: Starting to move towards an action learning approach – a substantial step change is required; not a quick fix."

4.3 Impact on the relationship between the LRC and subject departments

The Head of Learning Resources confirmed that "There has been a long battle to move resources so that there is more equality of spending across the curriculum. That is critical for success!"

A Colleague confirmed that there has been more emphasis in the last two years on supporting teaching and learning rather than on academic support: historically biological sciences skewed expenditure on resources.

Commenting on staff relationships he added:

"There is always a tension between vocational tutors and those who facilitate learning in a more general way. How much specific vocational knowledge and expertise is needed by facilitators of RBL? Students give very positive feedback about LRC staff and their support. We have moved a long way from the notion of a library. Integration of the library and the Learning Development Unit was very important. Relocation made it 'Far more a place to support learning' and part of that's access to information."

A subject librarian reported:

- More emphasis, when staff request material, on how it is going to be used. More match up of materials and student work
- Working more closely with teachers
- LRC staff see activity sheets so that they are more aware and can pre-plan and suggest materials
- Teachers refer to materials across the range that they know LRC holds.

He concluded that:

"Librarians must be involved at the front end. They must be willing to challenge assignments – if librarians are unsure what is required how can students understand?"

One department head saw more imaginative use of class time and better liaison with the LRC and students who have to go there. This had led to thinking about different ways of teaching and learning in classrooms, with a focus on improving learning skills. She saw the LRC staff as much more engaged in curriculum development, learning support and teaching.

"Talking through assignment together, we understand more about what they can help us with, and they get to know more about, for example, assessment. "A few years ago we would never have thought about talking to a librarian about assessment of an assignment.

"There has been quite a revolution in how we see their role – they've always known a lot more but I understand now. They come to curriculum meetings. They've been more proactive than teaching staff; have learnt about the courses we have been doing."

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4.4   Impact on the LRC staff

A Head of Department summarised the changes in LRC staff in terms of students placing higher value on the LRC, new justification for purchase of materials for RBL leading to LRC staff being more proactive about buying expensive resources, and a general enthusiasm for change – "At the moment staff are thinking too traditionally so teaching groups are not moving, just LRC staff."

The RBL Co-ordinator was concerned to identify the most effective roles for librarians to adopt to support RBL. "We have had to move out of a purely resource advice role into discussing how students are using materials and how staff are supporting this".

Asked how relationships with teaching staff had changed, a Librarian listed:

More insight into what students have to do; how they work; what they are doing.
More insight into what pressure staff are under.
The need to work on communication with staff as a continuous process – "We need to see assignments in practice we have been too slack in this".

Staff development was needed in dealing with educational jargon and in rudimentary web page design (linked to copyright implications). The main fear was that "If it succeeds there is too much work for three subject librarians."

The RBL Co-ordinator cautioned that "evangelising is a bad idea, especially from a librarian, because this invites the retort 'What do you know about teaching and learning'".

Musing on the role of the RBL Co-ordinator (who was a former lecturer), a head of department asked:

"Do you need a teacher as RBL Co-ordinator/developer even if the person is based in the LRC and reporting to a head of learning resources?

You need imagination to generate alternative ways/new approaches. Do librarians ask difficult questions?"

She added that:

"The RBL Co-ordinator has just written a paper laying down steps to making the Business Centre properly used to develop RBL approaches (at the moment it is a travesty) Would a librarian have done this?"

4.5   Impact of the new Learning Resource Centre

A lecturer enthused:

"The new Centre is brilliant. Where to put people to work independently – it's much better atmosphere than before. The staff are great, they have always been very helpful; really good."

The Head of Learning Resources referred to the "Key impetus of the new building: we do not want it to just develop apart from the academic departments; we need to be integrated (self preservation versus being chopped?)". He was very keen that the effectiveness of the LRC as a learning environment should be evaluated. To do this he separated provision of learning resources and their management from learner support and ensuring an effective learning environment. Extracts from the materials used for both these purposes can be found in the Appendices.

A department head waxed lyrical about the new Centre:

Opening things up: good things happen in the classroom but the LRC presents an amazing world students can access. So much more than the books. The new building is wonderful. Making

learning more accessible, enjoyable. They are sensible about noise. The building has made a heck of a difference."

4.6 Information skills

An information skills course leading to a BTEC award (level 2) was taught prior to this initiative but was abandoned when difficulties arose in funding, and because of the new focus on RBL. It became clear during the current initiative that students need information skills teaching. The LRC manager responded by identifying an Open College Network IT module (as approved by FEFC) as a basis for a new fundable programme and expected to be able to re-launch an accredited information skills programme.

5 Assessing the initiative

Librarians from two other colleges visited NESCOT as part of the project and made the following comments:

- Interesting to see that key skills delivery/support, and subject research support could be combined within a service. Although it is early days, "the seeds of success" seem to have been sewn.
- Use of multi-skilled Learning Resources Advisers on support staff grades to support information skills, key skills and IT was interesting
- Interesting partnership role with teachers in innovative strategies for supporting key skills delivery e.g. key skills 'conference' days, workshops
- College-wide involvement in RBL Projects
- Project links: from each project - to LRC staff
  - to contractual self-managed staff development days
  - to book budget (renamed RBL budget)
  - to key skills staff
- Convergence of learning resources services, which seemed well set up to support both student and staff needs avoiding duplication throughout the rest of the college
- Key skills – breaking down barriers
- College management backing
- Opportunities for closer liaison by LR staff with curriculum staff
- Resources following new initiatives where staff show evidence of use
- Accountability for spending on resources by central unit to meet curriculum area needs.

Main weaknesses:

- Timing of self managed staff development days can lead to lengthy postponement of work
- The remits for the project teams vary in the levels of accountability and volume of work entailed
- Membership of project groups has been upset by restructuring and reducing staff levels
- Accountability where project groups fail to achieve remit

6 Factors to be considered by people seeking to introduce a similar initiative

Two librarians from another case study library made these comments after visiting Nescot:

- Close collaboration and clear endorsement at Senior Management level
- Have tighter remits, owned by project groups, that are measureable and linked to timescale.
- Link resources to initiatives. Let the money follow proactivity
- Set up projects that can be properly supported by the LR staff available
- Make sure that the RBL plan and remit tie in with Departmental Strategic Plans. Make HoDs accountable for progress (or lack of) to management groups
- College-wide involvement places heavy demands on LR staff. Possible on this scale in well-resourced larger college.
- RBL as a remit could limit the range of curriculum development possibly by a team. Problems in presenting RBL as a tool to be used during, rather than a replacement for teacher interaction.

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Staff from active areas of the college could be the ones used for 'cross fertilisation', since it is academic staff and senior management who help promote initiatives and who need to see the light.

An 'insider's view' of the main success factors came from the head of learning resources:

1   Really good structures and mechanisms in place

2   Listening but purposeful facilitator to guide process

3   Spending the time – "There are not short cuts to consciousness raising".

4   Senior management putting in time and resources: investment in leader's remit, making training time available. Managers need to share a vision.

If you are promoting the LRC as a space for learning to occur it has to be the right sort of space, staff level and ambience.

Case study 2: Appendices of documents produced as part of this initiative

Draft LRC learning support service standard criteria

1. LRC and College Equal Opportunities policies are observed

2. Appropriate Health and Safety rules and regulations are observed

3. Appropriate user-support is provided when required

4. Information provided is accurate and current

5. Information is provided that enables a student to work independently at an appropriate level

6. Appropriate resources are available to support the activity in hand

7. Resources can be found readily and easily

8. Resources reserved arrive promptly

9. Appropriate accommodation is provided to suit a range of learner needs

10. Access to a PC is easy

11. Appropriate study space is available for effective use of learning resources

12. An appropriate learning environment is provided for learners where users show proper consideration for others.

Ensuring an effective learning environment

Staff working from Help Desks are responsible for supervising the learning activity undertaken by all students, not just those seeking help and support at the Help Desks.

The following activities are undertaken by staff on duty at the Help Desk:

1. Ensuring that LRC rules are observed by all users and taking prompt action where transgressions occur.

2. Reporting promptly where learning resources and equipment are not fit for their purpose.

3. Responding promptly where learning resources cannot be located.

4. Seeking assistance where students requiring support exceeds the capacity of the scheduled staff.

5. Being proactive in offering support to students who appear to be in difficulty but have not yet sought assistance or appears to be working in an unfocused or wasteful way.

Department of Health, Community and Care Studies

Curriculum Objectives

2)   to identify RBL project groups to achieve priorities identified in the Departmental RBL Plan

a)   I have identified RBL Project Groups to work on RBL initiatives.

RBL Reference	Curriculum area	Project Aim	Project expected outcomes	Project Leader	Project Members
DHI	SLDD	To select appropriate skills for support and developing using IT applications and to seek and evaluate the use of relevant software.	To have evaluated the use of specific learning support IT software and hardware to meet identified needs of the client group and reported as appropriate.	Janice Turner	Janice Turner Julia Parkes
DH2	Care Management, Hospital Play, Special Needs and counselling courses.	To extend flexible learning opportunities in Counselling and Counselling Skills.	Select and evaluate appropriate study skills, identify materials and adapt them in order to provide a flexible learning package to incorporate into learning programmes. Design a pilot for implementation with appropriate support.	Jan Quartermaine	Larry O'Carrol, Phillipa Shadrach-Evans, Jan Quartermaine
DH3	NVQ/GNVQ Care	To increase the variety of assessment as identified in CRE action plan by extending RBL opportunities taking into account the new care standards for NVQ.	One assignment selected form each level of GNVQ and NVQ to be adapted to maximise opportunities for independent study using resource-based learning. Evaluation of learning experience required.	Jan Quartermaine	Delia Williamson, Elaine Wilde, Trish Brown, Jan Quartermaine

DH4	DNN	To identify and adapt appropriate tutor-supported distance learning resources to support students enrolled on an evening-only option for the DNN top-up programme. To identify an implement appropriate strategies for tutor support.	Resources introduced to deliver 20% of the DNN top-up programme. Evaluation undertaken of the learning experience during the first semester.	Carol Williams	Lesley Kaye-Besley, Norma Jun-Tai, Pat Davis, Carol Williams, Jan van Ryssen, Gill Bifflestone
DH5	Health Care Practice: evidence-based practice	To identify appropriate search strategies and to find materials appropriate for inclusion in a work book "Developing Reliable Search Strategies" to be used in Evidence-based Practice Module.	A pack of materials appropriate for inclusion in a workbook; "Developing Reliable Search Strategies".	Pat Colliety	Pat Colliety, Janice Turner, Gwen Moorhouse, Marrion Brew, Chris Phillips
DH6	Health Care Practice: research	To develop materials linked to the of SPSS skills as a vehicle for independent learning and to pilot and evaluate materials.	A study pack of materials for developing SPSS skills that has been used and subsequently evaluated.	Jan Quartermaine	Chris Phillips

C   Identifies further learner support needs

Element	Grade 1	Grade 3	Grade 5
Identifies further needs the student may have.	All the following: • Identifies further needs the student may have • with appropriate questioning • responds to information the student provides and • provides further support as appropriate	All the following: • Identifies some of the further needs the student may have • begins to provide further support	• Makes no attempt to identify further support needs.
Where appropriate, monitors student learning activity and provides further support.	Where appropriate, all the following: • Observe students acting on the support and advice provided and • assesses the effectiveness of student activity as a result of advice given • approaches a student to collect feedback on the information provided and usefulness for the task in hand • provides additional information and support.	Where appropriate all of the following: • Observes student learning activity and • provides further appropriate support where necessary	When appropriate: • Makes no attempt to monitor student activity

Learning Observation
Nescot
Mark Foster
May 1999

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING LEARNING RESOURCES

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1.   The item should be directly related to the learning outcomes of the learning programme.

2.   The item should be able to be used by students working independently.

3.   The purchase should provide good value in terms of the percentage of the learning.

4.   The items should be that "best suited" to coverage of the learning outcomes
(Subject Librarians, Departmental RBL Co-ordinators and Learning Development
Advisers to advise).

5.   The item should not duplicate resources currently available in the Learning
Resources Centre, unless there is evidence of unsatisfied demand or where old editions
needs replacement.

Learner Support Observation Focus

A member of staff on duty in the LRC undertakes the following activities when supporting learners:

A.   **Collects details of request for support from a user**
            Welcomes users
            Checks for understanding of request

B.   **Evaluates request for support**
            Categorises user needs
            Clarifies user needs
            Matches available information to learner needs

C.   **Provides appropriate learner-support**
            Provides verbal and/or written information
            Develops user skills (where appropriate)
            Checks for understanding

D.   **Identifies further learner needs**
            Identifies further needs
            Monitors subsequent user activity

E.   **Manages an effective learning environment**
            Intervenes appropriately
            Observes Health and Safety

Learner Support Observation Proforma

Staff names   ……………………………………………   Date   ……………………

………………………………………………   Location ……………………

………………………………………………   Time   ……………………

Observer   ……………………………………………

1   Activities to support learners

A.   Collects details and evaluates request for support from a user (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Welcomes user		
Checks for understanding of request		
Categories user needs		
Clarifies user needs		
Matches available information to learner needs		

B   Provides appropriate learner – support (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Provides verbal and/or written information		
Develops user skills (where appropriate)		
Checks for understanding		

C.   Identifies further learner needs (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Identifies further needs		
Monitors subsequent user activity		

D.   Manages an effective learning environment (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Intervenes appropriately		
Health and safety		

2   Feedback to staff

Good practice

Areas for improvement

Prioritised action plan

3   Staff comments (optional)

4   Grading

Grade given by staff ……………...   Grade given by observer ………………..

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1   Introduction

Learning observations were carried out during two weeks. Trained observers from Learning Resources, but not involved in Help Desk support. They used specially written observational statements to evaluate the support offered to learners by staff working from the Upper and Lower Help Desks of the LRC. (See appendices for examples of documentation used.) The process was developed under the guidance and with the approval of Head of Quality Improvement. A report was completed for each interaction using a proforma and each observer prepared a summary report for each session.

Six observation periods were scheduled, each lasted for one hour, with time distributed between the two service points. Established procedures for lesson observation for feedback and reporting were used.

The sessions observed involved all Librarians and two LRAs from a work group of four.

2   Summary of six observation reports

A   Collect details and evaluates request for support from a user: Grade 1: 6 reports

Good practice highlighted

- Students warmly welcomed and dealt with respectfully, promptly and professionally. (6 reports)
- Good questioning and recapitulation techniques were used to gain understanding of student's needs. (2 reports)

Areas for improvement

- Students should be routinely welcomed rather than simply acknowledged (1 report)
- Reassurance should be offered for some students about there abilities (1 report)
- Students need to be updated where the period after welcoming and providing support becomes extended. (1 report)

B   Provides appropriate learner-support: Grade 1: 6 reports

Good practice highlighted

- Good quality information was provided that related closely to student's needs. (5 reports)
- Evident student satisfaction with support provided was high (2 reports)
- Referral to specialist staff was managed effectively (1 report)
- Independent learning widely encouraged once ability to proceed unaided was confirmed (1 report)

Areas for improvement

- Users could be further encouraged to participate more fully in the support process (1 report)
- Care should be observed in the use of any special terminology, particularly in IT (1 report)
- Staff should be more confident in deciding where referral should take place (1 report)

C **Identifies further learner needs:**   Grade 1: 2 reports; Grade 2: 3 reports; N/A: 1 report

Good practice highlighted

- Careful but unobtrusive monitoring of activity once information provided (1 report)
- Students were effectively encouraged to ask further questions (1 report)

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of post-enquiry activity and further needs should be more regular (1 report)
- Routine identification of further needs and offer of further support should take place. (1 report)

Staff Comment

"Follow-up to an observed enquiry took place after the observation period ended."

D **Manages an effective learning environment:** Grade 1: 4 reports; Grade 2: 1 report; N/A: 1 report

Areas for improvement

• Observation of breaches of LRC rules should be improved (1 report)

Staff Comment

"When it is busy, it is not always possible to observe rule-breaking and to act on it unless it is disturbing working on the enquiry at hand."

3   Conclusions

As recommended by Head of Quality Improvement, no overall grade was awarded for the sessions observed. An overall grade was awarded based on performance for each part of the process, but only for those enquiries where it applied. Summarising the grading, the following overall assessment was been agreed for each element of learning support:

A   Collects details and evaluates request for support from a user: Grade 1

B   Provides appropriate learner-support: Grade 1

C   Identifies further learner needs: Grade 2

D   Manages an effective learning environment: Grade 1

Agreed overall grade for learning support offered from the Upper and Lower Help Desk of LR Grade TBA

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4   Summary of the quality of the student's experience of learning support at LRC Help Desks

In almost every observation students were dealt with speedily and effectively by staff working at the Help Desks. Effective questioning was used to gain further insight into students' needs. One observation report noted that students may appreciate being welcomed and reassured in addition to being acknowledged and another commented that students could have been better informed about a delay. The support provided was at an appropriate level and focussed, leading to observation of several incidents of appreciation expressed by students. Another observation report highlighted the need to encourage students to participate more in the enquiry process and for decisions on referral to specialist support to be made with more confidence. Another observer reporting that greater care could be deployed in the use of IT terminology. Once information has been provided, students were encouraged to follow up their enquiries with additional questions, although one report suggested that this could, where appropriate, be a more routine activity. Staff were reported to be skilled observers of student activity once information had been provided, intervening wherever necessary. An observation report felt that this could, where appropriate, be a more routine activity whenever time allowed. Staff management of the LRC learning environment was graded highly, although a single incident of failure to act was reported.

5   Feedback meeting

Awaited

6   Recommended Action

1. To arrange a programme of staff development to provide opportunities for staff to share good practice and to develop skills, in particular for the following aspects of Help Desk work:

   • developing effective strategies to provide a welcoming service
   • developing effective strategies to effectively elicit student's further needs.
   • developing effective strategies to encourage students to return for further support when additional needs arise.
   • developing effective strategies for dealing effectively with breaches of LRC rules.

LRC Manager, May 1999

Draft Performance Indicators

Set 1: Evaluating the effectiveness of RBL-based curriculum developments.

Part A   Outcomes

a)   Student use of learning materials and resources. (Are there changes? Are different materials being used?)
b)   Quality of student assignments submitted for assessment.
c)   Communication between Learning Resources staff and academic staff
d)   Collaboration and partnership between academic staff and Learning Resources staff.
e)   Process of curriculum development. (Resources planned in; more systematic process)

Part B   Process

a)   The amounts of different types of support offered to students by LRC staff.
b)   Whether and to what extent resources held centrally are used.
c)   Whether and to what extent LRC staff have access to information about programme areas.
d)   Extent of consultation by academic staff with LRC staff.
e)   Amount of mapping of non-RBL assignments to learning resources.
f)   Provision of information justifying the purchase of new learning materials.
g)   Amount of use of learning resources purchased.
h)   Provision of staff development for LRC staff (to equip them for a changing role in curriculum development).
i)   Links between RBL initiatives and user education programmes.

Case study 3: Thomas Danby College Teaching Information Skills

1   Context:

Medium-sized Inner City College; full range of courses; little HE.

Some information skills courses and assignment support already provided, much of it ad hoc and in tutorial time.

In 1996-7 there was growing concern about students' achievement, retention rates and the need to 'restore the curriculum', but funding was needed to tackle the problems.

2   Initiative:

Development of *The Student Award*, designed to support student learning and attracting two units of funding with the overall aim of improving student retention. Submission was prepared by the Head of Quality – once accepted, the course had to be written in a rush. The Head of the LRC spent her Summer holiday writing a programme of study and worksheets for Module 2, which was taught by Librarians; the other modules were taught by Tutors (with some Librarian involvement). The Library input is 9-12 hours per group (by Librarians with City and Guilds 7307 certification).

Module 2, delivered by LRC staff, covers: Catalogues
                                                   Periodicals
                                                   CD ROMS
                                                   Internet

The Award is taught at levels 2 and 3 and for some groups only. Tutors decide whether students on their courses will follow the Award.

➢ Cover was provided by the College for one of the Librarians' usual work for 16 weeks (a new Library Assistant one day per week and an existing Library Assistant paid to act up to a professional post – one day per week)
➢ Went very well but the rush to implement meant that issues over timetabling, collaborative planning and assessment had to be tackled in the following year
➢ Timing of inputs was found to be critical. More flexible delivery was offered in Year 2 – not just one session per week
➢ Crisis over funding for Level 3 students meant that time was not spent on planning in 1998-9 as anticipated; the College was unsure whether it would continue but the programme was pushed by the Director of Academic Affairs and was finally passed by the Auditor – 1998-9 became another rushed implementation.

3   Outcomes:

➢ Positive feedback from staff and students
➢ Evidence of better skills
➢ Much more **confident** use of the Library and enhanced Librarian/student relationship
➢ Some courses **not** doing the whole Student Award have integrated the substance of 'information seeking' into their own programmes, keeping some Librarian input
➢ Working more in **partnership** with academic staff (discussing (learning not just resources). However, tutors and librarians were still working separately rather than fully collaborating.

4   Changes needed:

Evidence of student progress to be generated through assignments and coursework, not "death by worksheets". More integration of information seeking activities into normal work.
Longer sessions and smaller groups (students' request).

More planning to revise modules.

5 Librarian development needs

Assignment design, curriculum development and assessment.

Overall, the award has been "a good base for developing ideas to help students' learning."

Case Study 3: Commentary

"It's like a mini user survey when you are working that closely with students."

1 Planning and managing the initiative

Various people reported that the course had pushed the FEFC funding mechanism to its limits and "now there are difficulties – they will not fund a course with no progression – therefore it may not be available for level 3 students who were the bulk of take up last year (level 3 students get set the type of work that requires research and independent study)." One person added that "If more linked HE provision was available in-house the college could claim progression". The course was finally funded for 1998-9.

Two tutors felt that greater senior management involvement was now necessary:

"The SMT need to take a stand on how time will be allocated. Timetabling is a major issue!" (One tutor, who had run the Award using timetabled time, had few delivery problems.)

They added that:

"Overall, the Award seems to be a good way of using contact time, even though it is limited time."

The Head of Quality felt that more recognition of the value of this type of course was needed at policy and funding levels; "It should be built into student entitlement. The course needs to stay accredited and recognisable as an entity, not disappear into rest of the programme."

2 Introducing the initiative

The initial launch was described as "Stumbling forward in confusion" due to the uncertainty over funding. This meant that some programme teams hung back and did not get involved in the Award.

A major factor in achieving the progress made so far was that the Director of Academic Affairs had championed the approach. The Head of Quality felt that the commitment of the SMT and Heads of School support had been important and will continue to be because of funding problems. Something was already in place for the library to build on, in the form of a course delivered in previous years to some students but not accredited. It took three weeks for the library manager initially to put the library module together in bits and pieces, "then hours to adapt it as the course went along: for example it took one day to develop the quiz".

Some participants felt that the initiative had been brought in too quickly, with the result that the whole programme was not tied in as closely as it should have been to students' courses. "They should not see it as extra bits of paper to do." (One Tutor created an assignment to dovetail the award with outcomes required by BTEC and as a result used fewer worksheets to generate evidence). At present, the less able students were producing less evidence: better mapping of skills would help them by making tracking of all the bits of evidence easier.

More co-ordinated planning and mapping was now seen as vital to ensure that the Award was not duplicating what was occurring elsewhere (such as asking students to generate extra evidence of

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skills already occurring in assignments). Variations arose from the lack of planning time, according to the Head of Learning Support.

Another result of the speed with which the programme was put into place was the lack of lead time to get people on board, to give them confidence in materials delivery.

3   Delivering the initiative

From the perspective of the LRC, the course took up: "50% of the LRC manager's in year one; 10% in year two; 40% of her deputy's time in year one per week covered: then enhancing and refining in year two." Cover for part of one librarian's time came out of the School for Learning Support budget and not college budget. Without this support "life would have been intolerable. As it was, a lot of things did not get done". This raised the issue "What has to go? What is most important?"

Programme teams decide whether students need the training: they 'sell' it to students by linking it strongly to assignments.

The next issue to be addressed was assessing the prior learning of students, but exploring this at the beginning of the year was problematic because "students do not then have a clear view of what the work entails" and therefore of the skills demanded of them. The librarians used a SWOT analysis with students, with some success.

The Head of Quality said that: "For evaluating input, we are beginning to collect data; snapshots of the purposes of using the centre as well as levels of use of the LRC; records of enquiries already taken; do Award students ask different types/levels of question?"

Similarly the LRC manager was looking at the assessment process and locating evidence: she envisaged movement away from worksheets towards group work, observation, a reflective log on use of resources and learning process evaluation. Since this could present problems in tracking evidence, LRC staff were planning to use the new tracking grid and assignment information strategy material for portfolio evidence.

A jointly delivered course of this kind required constant communication about logistics/attendance; what was actually done in class; assignments and evidence; and informal award support.

In fact, the LRC Manager concluded, "We need constant liaison and marketing of courses and workshops. Informal relationships are very good but not enough, especially when staff are under pressure and morale is low; then they don't come back!"

One of the issues in delivering the initiative was about the range of teaching methods used in the library. In the first year of the Award, worksheets had been the main vehicle. In order to improve the quality of student learning, the librarians began looking at other group teaching methods, such as brainstorming and mapping of information sources. These were seen as "much better and more enjoyable."

4   Impact of the initiative

4.1   Impact on students

One mature student interviewed welcomed the module because she felt that she needed help; others initially felt that it was a chore and extra work. Initially they did not realise the scale of the subject/course demands (e.g. assignments). "It was better once we got into the assignments and could see the amount of work demanded." They wanted more initial explanation of what the Award was about and how it would help them on their courses and felt that the process could have been covered in less time.

They valued the wide range of information covered (including sources such as periodicals, newspapers and folders of cuttings) and the group work.

The Internet session had not impressed this group: "They signed on for you and turned on the computers; so you don't know where to start on your own and can't be bothered to go through all that hassle". (This group was not impressed by the Internet: they thought that the information was "too American".)

On the other hand, and on the basis of contact with a much greater number of students, the LRC staff felt that the CD-ROM and the Internet possibilities had usually impressed them. Some specific benefits for students noted by teachers included improvement in their CD-ROM/Internet skills; better action planning and identifying what they needed to do; more ability to organise their work; and wider-ranging research.

Tutors expected to see an impact next year (the Award had just ended) when students had to do a major piece of independent work with lots of data gathering "The students should be more able to cope with the responsibility".

Overall, the Head of Quality felt that the initiative was valuable to students but not as much as had been hoped because of the haste in introducing it that year. "It will be better next time after a rethink and an amended programme".

In the view of LRC staff interviewed, although students were not necessarily aware that they had benefited:

- they tended to seek out the Librarian they knew for help and not just use the enquiry desk
- they were a lot more aware of the range of information available
- some students were using more periodicals and reference books
- some groups seemed more comfortable with the library (e.g. Beauty Therapists made more use of the library).

Whether the right groups of students were being 'volunteered' for the Award was debatable but "How do you decide which students should get the award" asked two LRC staff, "we cannot do it for all! What are we able to offer the rest?"

This became even more problematic when, according to the LRC Manager:

"The way the courses are going, students can do OK on three to four books borrowed and not have to go beyond that to CD ROM or Internet. It is not an assignment requirement to use wider sources, so a lot don't bother."

4.2   Impact on teachers

The Head of Quality felt that:

"Tutors need to be prepared to redesign practices and re-think tutorials and assignments. People feel things can't be done differently and an Award like this therefore becomes a problem." He saw the programme as posing some fundamental challenges to teaching staff. "Awareness of the learning process is not sufficiently part of the profession. If the practice was as it should be, where tutors are process-centred, this programme would not be an issue. Therefore the orientation of different tutors is important to success here. (Those engaged with the BTEC model and GNVQ are OK.) "Those staff with a great subject orientation are problematic and how some subjects are taught does not necessarily fit in well with the Award. How people perceive their own subjects is important."

"Overall there is a need for raising awareness of learning styles and skills and their impact on delivery."

4.3   Impact on the relationship between teachers and LRC staff

The tutors interviewed saw this initiative as a continuation of working together not a new departure. In the past, designated subject librarians had built-up relationships with tutors about

sources, relevant material and curriculum meetings at which librarians were alerted to assignments and the student timetable.

A close working relationship with the library was important for the Award. Librarians had used their expertise in finding information; searching; teaching; and technology. Librarians had also helped with other pieces of work related to the Award. Tutors felt that although it would have been possible to run the course without librarians it would have lost a lot of quality and could have run into a lot of time problems. On balance, they felt that the Award had been worthwhile. The work so far had attracted praise for the LRC staff at curriculum meetings.

Viewed by the LRC staff "Before, collaboration tended to be one-off around resources, management of resources and appropriate key words for indexing periodicals. Now, it is more working of equals because both are contributing to the Award. There has been a big shift: in the past talk was about resources, now talk is about teaching and learning. Collaboration now needs to be taken further: with more communication about delivery styles and assignment design; more curriculum talk is necessary."

"There is fuller awareness by tutors of the professional skills of Library staff – broader areas of evaluation, assessment and, appropriate interventions with learners have been recognised (but there is still an issue of grading and pay!)"

One suggestion made was for a joint session to draw on Tutor and Librarian knowledge on using/selecting keywords, as early as possible in the course.

4.4   Impact on LRC staff

LRC staff interviewed felt that, as a result of the initiative:

♦   relationships with students and tutors were strengthened
♦   they had more insight into pressures lecturers are under and how they work!
♦   they had increased knowledge of courses and assignments set, and
♦   increased understanding of student learning (how it occurs or not) and their problems

There was now a need to work on assignment design and attend different meetings: (fewer cross college, high powered ones and more course review/design ones?)

"There were good spin-offs on working with staff, such as being invited to a curriculum development meeting about the Award." Overall, they "Enjoyed it and hope to build on it. We feel more confident in the role now!"

An Issue of staff development had emerged clearly and was described by two LRC staff. "whole range of skills, confidence and competence to deliver stuff like this: covering learning -how it occurs; structuring sessions; working with groups; building confidence in the facilitator role and teaching role - this role is different to working on a one to one basis. Confidence here matters; librarians need to know what questions to ask – but we are getting better."

The demands of the Award programme also raised fundamental question about the role of librarians, as outlined by the LRC Manager:

•   Are we asking librarians to do two jobs?
•   The range of qualifications that librarian need: multi-skilling does need time
•   Issues of grades and pay. (Six years ago the librarian had been paid extra for teaching classes – but she was then at a lower grade. Now librarians are on grades equivalent to beginning lecturers.)
    (The Head of Quality saw this as all going the wrong way; with lecturers paid less, not librarians being paid more.)

5   Overall assessment

The Director of Learning Resources was in no doubt about the goal: "It is worth doing! Students have a right to have the skills to help them succeed on their courses; it is only OK if they have skills. Many of them do not know what skills are needed and that they don't have them; reduced contact hours means lots of independent learning/RBL and they need skills to survive. We are trying to come up with some way of doing it that enables them to see the value and benefit of getting skills and developing a bit. We have made a real start and need to continue.

"The Student Award provided a good base for developing ideas; even if it goes we can use the ideas to integrate more into courses; but without the Award we must ensure rigorous checks on progress."

Case study 3: Appendix A

Evaluating the effectiveness of a new information skills programme

Outcome Indicators

1   Quality of student assignments (evidence of wider range of information sources used; more relevant information). Done by teaching staff in 1998 but not formally by LRC. An effective target would be a sample of 20%. LRC would look for evidence of planning and use of resources e.g. bibliographies, contents and information seeking strategy.

2   Quality and type of communication between learners and LRC staff (different relationships; different approaches to staff)

       Evidence: critical incident notes; observation.

3   User attitudes (increasing confidence in use; awareness of range of resources offered; usefulness of LRC)

       Evidence: In 1998 LRC used a questionnaire; now using student SWOT analyses during the course and more in depth evaluation with a smaller sample.

Process indicators

4   Staff development (range provided; LRC and academic staff)

5   Knowledge of the curriculum

6   Input into assignment planning and design

7   Teaching models/strategies used to deliver information skills (more or less effective teaching practices). This is a critical process indicator as different strategies may have different levels of impact.

       Evidence: Lesson plans; worksheets.

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THE STUDENT PROGRESSION AWARD

Unit 1   How do I Learn

This unit helps you to understand how you learn best and how to organise yourself for learning. You will be involved in personal and group tutorials.

Unit 2   Information Seeking

This unit helps you to access the wide range of information available in the Learning Centre. You will learn to use the Internet, CD-ROM's as well as books and journals. This unit will enable you to search for the information you need for your assignments.

Unit 3   Using Information

This unit helps you to develop skills using information. You will learn to use study guides, learning packs and other materials.

Unit 4   Presenting Ideas and Information

This unit helps you to present your ideas by speaking, writing and demonstrating. You can show your skills by completing practical tasks.

Unit 5   Collaborative Learning

This unit helps you to work with others; you will share ideas during discussions and debates and work in a group or a team.

Unit 6   Building on Skills and Experience and Planning for the Future

This unit will help you to set and achieve objectives. You will work with Careers and Guidance tutors to review your future options.

Unit: Information Seeking   Level Three   Student Name:

Topic	Learning Outcome	Type of Evidence	Location of Evidence	Assessor's signature
Identifying a range of sources	• Identify a wide range of information sources in Libraries and Learning Centres	• From Library Induction have copies of leaflets outlining range of services, map and bookmark	*	
	• Understand how the catalogue can be used to: Find a range of resources Locate specific materials Reserve resources, print out lists of resources	• Information Seeking Record Sheet and Printouts relating to specific assignments	*	
	• Use people as resources	• Action Plan and Information Seeking Record Sheet	*	
	• Identify and locate non-book resources	• Information Seeking Record Sheet, printouts and photocopies related to specific assignments *(The following Information Sheets should be filed in portfolios as supporting evidence:* *Using the Library Catalogue x 2* *Dewey Decimal Classification x 2* *Annotated List of Periodicals)*		

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"The LRC is about the broadest thing in the College." (Curriculum Manager)

1   Context

A contracting college in a rural county.

A new Study Centre was envisaged as part of a major rationalisation of space (following an FEFC inspection report), which entailed moving all College departments onto one site and losing substantial amounts of space. The LRC Manager was co-opted onto the SMT three years previously when given strategic responsibility for managing the accommodation changes, including preparations for the new building (and she now continues as a full member of the team).

It was decided that evaluation of the Learning Skills course being offered by LRC staff could usefully serve as a means of clarifying future staff roles and space allocation in the proposed new Study Centre.

The new Centre was to be one of four Learning Centres in the college; it was seen as the information hub.

2   Initiative

The focus for the project was on the new Learning Skills course which was delivered to a number of groups in 1998-9. Their main concerned was with the implications of delivering such a course on LRC staffing.

The main strands of activity were:

➢ LRC staff involved in delivering the courses kept a 'research journal' to capture:

• the amount of time spent on all relevant activities (e.g. planning lessons, developing materials, assessment, meetings with other staff, as well as lesson delivery)

• points at which they needed support or would have found it helpful (and what types of support)

• the skills and knowledge that people would like to improve ("I wish I knew more about…")

➢ Interviews were held with teaching staff to evaluate the course. They were primed with three questions so that the evaluation would not come to them cold:

• In general, how wide was the range of sources used by the students in their assignments last year?

• Did you notice any obvious gaps in the research skills of your students

• Have you noticed any difference in the research skills of this year's students?

The Information and Research Skills course offered by the LRC had two units. Developing Information and Research Skills and a Careers Related Information and Research Skills option (which ran into some delivery troubles, although tutors saw it as valuable support to their careers advice and guidance).

The main course was accredited, portfolio and evidence-driven and was initially offered in four pilot areas as a 30 hour course (with 21 hours guided learning hours and 9 hours private-study). The course was designed to provide the learner with effective and relevant training, thus

enhancing the learning process for the student. The key was that they were formalising what students already did when undertaking research for their assignments in the LRC.

3   Change in focus

The idea of a new Study Centre emerged from a Senior Management Residential weekend following years of informal discussion. The LRC manager didn't have to say anything: the other participants made the case.

Although some teaching staff did not see the need for a new Study Centre, the Principal gave this change his strong support. (He had previously been involved in helping to create a new Learning Centre at his previous College, but had experienced some difficulties then.)

The proposed Study Centre was given further impetus by a presentation to senior management of the results of a consultancy report (by The Responsive College Unit) on a series of staff focus groups on the scope for the new Learning Resource Centre to "deliver an effective and flexible learning environment". This was seen as an important opportunity for the College and a "chance to develop a genuine partnership between LRC, IT specialist staff and staff in curriculum areas".

Discussion about the role of the Study Centre was stimulated further by the parallel plans to create three other learning centres. This led to a search for clarity about the distinctive contribution to be made by the Study Centre and how it would work with the other learning centres (Media, Art and Design; Science Suite; Health and Health Care).

As the momentum built up towards creation of the new Study Centre, discussion centred on how space could best be used to support teaching and learning and especially key skills work. The idea emerged of having assigned areas in the Study Centre for clusters of Departments, as a locus for groupwork etc.

At this point, the ideas about future roles and skills that we had been examining with the LRC staff began to be transformed into specific action. Six new link posts were created for the new Study Centre, each to work on an agreed programme with a cluster of departments for one third of their time (with the remainder allocated to the Study Centre).

Each subject area was charged with proposing how to use their portion of the link person time. The link people would manage a proportion of the LRC resources (books etc).

The project team was invited back at this point to explore some issues about the use of the new posts and of the wider integration of the Study Centre into the curriculum.

Plans for the new building were revealed at this meeting and led to some discussion.

On the basis of this meeting we recommend that:

the Curriculum Managers should be asked to specify their needs for their Link person, that clusters could then be created, based on common aspirations, and they could then pursue their discussion about the link role within each cluster.

We raised doubt about whether enough staff would really support the **change** that was needed. Finally, we suggested that the Learning Facilitator should describe ways in which clusters might use the Study Centre (offering 'action images' to convey her vision) since there were only limited ideas around at present (at least in the group that we met).

The role and required attributes that emerged for the new link people or 'Subject Support Co-ordinators' as they came to be described, was advertised to be:

"responsible for the enquiry and information service within the Centre and for establishing and maintaining appropriate links with [their] curriculum area to ensure [their] students are provided with the necessary support to become independent in their learning. [They] will have experience working in an educational learning environment, a minimum of two years experience in a similar

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role or a relevant degree. In addition [they] will be IT literate and have outstanding inter-personal skills."

The restructuring of LRC staff also resulted in full convergence of the Library Administration and IT teams.

Case Study 4: Commentary

Although the focus of this initiative was on the information skills work and then on the changing relationship between the LRC staff and Lecturers as a result of the new link posts, both were subsumed within the larger agenda of designing and opening the new Study Centre. As a result, the commentary tended to shift from one to another of these issues according to the viewpoints of the people interviewed at each stage. Most informative, from the project point of view, was a meeting of project researchers with eight Curriculum Managers at the College in March 1999, at the point when the link posts had been confirmed.

(This discussion was clouded by an imminent restructuring due in August). The limitations of the existing library were fully recognised (it was likened to visiting a public lavatory!) and it was hoped that a more accessible centre with designated areas for each cluster might reduce the number of students not using the library and make life easier for part-time students.

(One particular pleasure for the project team was to be invited to run a workshop based on this project for a gathering of COFHE Librarians in November 1999, held in the new Study Centre.)

1 Planning the initiative

2 Delivering the initiative

The information skills project almost foundered when the key staff member involved moved on to another job. Two of the potential link people also gained promotion elsewhere but they were swiftly replaced.

Assignment support diaries in relation to information skills indicated how substantial this sort of commitment can become. Actual session delivery could take up to 4 hours per day and the peak day shown included 3 _ hours for delivery, 1 _ hours for preparation, 3 hours of meetings with teaching staff, and _ an hour in preparing user education materials.

This day was neatly rounded off with 2 hours on the enquiry desk!

3 Impact of the initiative and follow-up

The teaching staff response to the initial Information and Research Skills course was generally positive, with recognition of a broader range of materials being used and more confidence with CD-ROMs and the Internet.

The run-up to the opening of the new centre was described by one Librarian as creating "a buzz for everyone. It's exciting, but it has to be a controlled buzz – otherwise people start to fear what will happen". This was said at the point where the renewed interest in information skills work was becoming clear (with the new posts being announced) but with the new staff structure imminent.

But how would this new support for information skills and related work manifest itself? Most of the participants at our meeting with Curriculum Managers had given little thought to how to employ the link staff, apart from one who had used their library contact well in the past, "but timetabling into new area would utilise them more. Students will be going over there with Tutors and will use our person as a support." Another manager envisaged the link staff acting as 'ambassadors' in persuading teaching staff to have a stake in the new Study Centre and anticipated having induction visits for staff: "launch parties: especially for part-time staff".

As to the required qualities for the link staff, one manager saw a straightforward option, "If the link is a basic skills specialist we can run an extra group, not out of budget. If not, the person will be a photocopying resources, making sure my resource base up to standard". Unfortunately for that manager, the latter option was ruled out at the outset.

There was consensus that the links should be approachable, with good interpersonal skills: and they would have to like students! This led to the suggestion that there might be a secondment from clusters to this post; if the advantage would be that the seconded person would know the culture of the College.

Another view was that the link would require good research skills, "knowing how to access information independently in their own time – acting as an information conduit who knows what is available from various sources".

Plans for the learning centre included provision of open learning areas, with study-based timetabled use of space for 12 to 18 people and scope for private study and four computers available per pool (or cluster area).

4 Success factors

The Study Centre manager summarised the main success factors as:

- a combination of proactive staff at the outset, including the Head of Learning Resources (who was seconded to the senior management team as Accommodation Project Manager) and the Assignment Support Co-ordinator, who had developed impressive assignment support and then learning skills programmes

- a two pronged attack: with senior management commitment and good relations with teaching staff at operational level

- a clear goal which linked strongly the central college priorities (of downsizing and increased learning support)

- perseverance: this was a gradual process of enhancement of services offered by the library, which had its roots in a traditional user education programme

- flexibility: including imaginative use of the staffing budget, with temporary and part-time staff

- radical thinking: willingness to use the creation of the new Study Centre to ask fundamental questions about the kinds of people needed to meet the purpose of the Study Centre and their skills and roles

- an element of luck in who was seconded and in a timely (if drastic) restructuring.

PART D: Effective Support in Action: Some General Conclusions from the Effective College Library Project

Becoming more effective: some choices   Sharon Markless and David Streatfield

The Effective College Library research project ran from 1995 to the Spring of 1999. Phase one involved a review of evidence about the extent of library support of teaching and learning in further education.[25] Phase two involved developing and monitoring initiatives in seven 'case study' colleges aimed at enhancing library support for teaching and learning in various settings.[26] This work was funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, Further Education Development Agency and more recently by the Library and Information Commission.

One of the key messages emerging from this research is that a clear focus for development is vital. Libraries that try to become more effective across a number of fronts at once often end up not making a real impact on teaching and learning. In a time of limited (and in some cases still shrinking) resources, choosing to concentrate effort in one area of importance seems to be the best way to make the college library more effective overall. Choosing a narrow focus can be difficult. When we asked a group of college librarians what effectiveness might encompass and by what criteria they would like the effectiveness of their own libraries to be judged, long lists were generated:

- ♦   Quality of liaison/communication with teaching staff
- ♦   Strength of curriculum links
- ♦   Involvement in curriculum development (course planning etc.)
- ♦   Meeting college mission statement
- ♦   Communication/peer development amongst library staff
- ♦   Adequate staffing
- ♦   Helpfulness of staff
- ♦   Students able to use a wide range of resources effectively
- ♦   Quality of library development plans
- ♦   Ease of access to/availability of resources
- ♦   'Busy' purposeful activity
- ♦   Appearance of the library
- ♦   Value for money: stock acquisition/ stock size (per head)
- ♦   Levels of usage (including IT): proportion of students using

Undoubtedly all the elements suggested contribute to library efficiency or effectiveness. However, when trying to become **more** effective, difficult choices have to be made about which areas of work should be maintained (the basic service) and in which areas the library should try to move forward. This choice is often hindered by the library development plan itself. Library plans do not usually distinguish between maintenance and development. They present librarians with a mass of activities and targets all labelled 'development'. It is not surprising that librarians sometimes end up with a lot to do but with little sense of getting anywhere.

Many college librarians might usefully begin their quest for increased effectiveness by deciding what is essential service and infrastructure maintenance and how much resource this will 'use up'. ("As a library manager observed, "tidying and shelving has suffered to develop a new proactive approach") Making this decision will then enable them to identify spare capacity that can be used for real advancement. (We have found in our planning workshops that this way of thinking can be very empowering in itself, giving a renewed sense of purpose.)

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[25] STREATFIELD, D. R. and MARKLESS, S. *The effective college library* British Library Research and Innovation Report 21 *Developing FE Series* 1 (8) London: Further Education Development Agency 1997.

[26] MARKLESS, S and STREATFIELD, D.R. *The really effective college library Report on phase 2 of the Effective College Library project* Twickenham: Information Management Associates 2000.

Librarians should try to collaborate with teaching staff in deciding what to maintain and what to enhance within their own college. The amount of 'spare capacity' will obviously influence the focus and scale of any initiative. However some spare capacity must be generated if the library is to become more effective. Even in single person libraries we have seen that, using this approach, it is possible to identify some development time by keeping maintenance activity firmly under control. Finding development time requires a 'reflective practice' approach in which none of the existing library services are offered without question. Everything in the library should be viewed as provisional.

It is interesting to note that in two of the project case studies, the librarians made it very clear that progress was not dependent on extra resources becoming available. One library manager was adamant that people should not wait for more time, staff or money before embarking on an initiative: good initiatives tend to attract some extra resources afterwards!

Where the development focus is well chosen, what begins as development activity using spare capacity, can turn into a core activity of the library that needs to be maintained in subsequent years. This then allows the service to choose further areas for change or to shift on to the next step of the current initiative. Producing a written plan that incorporates this two tier approach of maintenance and development into its actions and targets can focus effort and engender a sense of making progress, which is important for keeping up morale.

The case studies presented elsewhere[27] describe some initiatives chosen by college librarians to enhance their effectiveness. In each case, moving forward required a level of concentrated effort and staff time that could not be sustained across a number of fronts at once. Again, each case study evaluation showed that focusing development in one key area increased the impact that the libraries had on teaching and learning in their colleges. Critically, even quite narrowly focused initiatives altered relationships with students and with teaching staff, changed perceptions of the role of the library and its contribution to the work of the college, and increased the visibility of the library. The librarians were then able to capitalise on their efforts and move more effectively to address further areas of concern. In many cases an enhanced profile led to invitations to collaborate on other specific projects. Having a noticeable impact in one area seems to produce more benefits than small, incremental development across a number of fronts.

What initiatives can make a difference?

The strategies outlined below are intended to complement our descriptions of the larger scale initiatives undertaken in the case study colleges. In many institutions there is not enough spare capacity or support to take on big technological developments, new courses or a redesign of the job descriptions of LRC staff. However we have seen that significant development in any one of the following more contained areas can have an impact. In some libraries, these activities may already be part of 'maintenance', in others they entail a difficult change of approach.

1   Individual student support/enquiry work

The individual student may not appear to be a fruitful place to begin a quest for increased effectiveness. Growing student numbers, a more heterogeneous student body and a decline in taught hours (leading to more emphasis on independent learning) have put pressure on the enquiry desk and have eroded the time needed for high quality one-to-one support. A review of this service may, however, provide some interesting opportunities for progress:

a)   It is amazing how many libraries see themselves as supporting the curriculum and student learning and yet how few librarians have observed classroom/workshop-based lessons. Following the learner from enquiry to lesson (or from lesson to enquiry) is illuminating and can alter librarians' perceptions of lecturing staff and of the learning process. This 'shadowing' has been harnessed most powerfully when 'pairing' has occurred. When a lecturer has observed at the enquiry desk and a librarian has watched activity in the classroom, what happens between assignment briefing and searching for

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[27] MARKLESS, S and STREATFIELD, D.R. *op. cit.*

information becomes a bit clearer. Seeing different parts of the process can enable all staff to improve the way it fits together

b)   Close recording of what really occurs at the enquiry desk can give food for thought. What percentage of time is actually spent on 'teaching skills'? (Teaching skills so that they can be used again in the future takes time and reinforcement.) How much time is spent in directing students; in answering queries about equipment; or providing a speedy resource service? Clarity about what is going on can radically alter how the library allocates staff to the enquiry desk; on what basis one-to-one ad hoc support is offered; and what the purpose of the enquiry desk becomes.

c)   In one LRC, the one-to-one support provided by its staff was voluntarily submitted to academic scrutiny. The LRC Manager argued that if the LRC was to promote itself as a place in which learning occurred with support from LRC staff, the process should be observed in the same way that teaching in the classroom was observed to monitor quality and evaluate effectiveness. The observation schedule used in teaching was heavily adapted for use in the LRC (extracts from this can be found in Appendix A). Selected teaching staff then did some enquiry desk observation and provided feedback. This initiative had several benefits:

♦   the range and quality of support provided by LRC staff was more widely appreciated;

♦   the LRC was seen to be part of the same quality assurance process as other teaching departments;

♦   debate about what should /did happen at the enquiry desk was generated in the LRC;

♦   high quality information was gathered to demonstrate how LRC staff supported student learning.

2   *Developing information skills*

An initiative that is carefully focused on a major assignment, or on one course, has provided an important impetus for development in a number of colleges. Although such initiatives appear to be small in scale, they are still demanding of staff time. High quality session planning is always time consuming: this is likely to entail meetings with the appropriate teaching staff for planning: arranging the timing of the library inputs on information skills; deciding where the teaching can occur, which resources will be needed, and the respective roles of the librarian and lecturer; and discussing group management issues such as group size and whether to use a 'carousel' approach. In one sixth form college, a year of intermittent library involvement in one course has led to more detailed discussions about team teaching in a broader context and provided a basis for running a college-wide staff development workshop. In this as in other situations, successful concrete examples offer more powerful arguments for extending the role of the library than any number of papers or discussions. One important element of the successful initiatives was the collection of 'before' and 'after' information covering students' skills, knowledge of relevant information sources and attitudes. (See appendix B for examples of both assessment instruments.)

3   *Enhancing the range and quality of resources*

It is, of course, very difficult to support teaching and learning effectively within a college without appropriate resources. For some librarians, extending the range and relevance of their resources is the prime focus for development; and this often means concentrating on the technology. However it is also salutary to reflect on what many librarians told us during our research: that due to changing courses and inappropriate purchasing by lecturers, significant numbers of library resources were underused. Becoming more effective sometimes usefully started with trying to tie the purchase of resources more closely to curriculum use.

One of the case study colleges, which is fostering resource-based learning, has replaced its formula funding approach to buying resources with one which supports specific RBL projects. Departments have to fill in a form that outlines how and in what context resources will be used. Once resources are purchased, their use is monitored and information fed back to lecturers to inform future decisions. This approach had led to greater use of centrally held resources – and improved students chances of success in finding relevant information. In this case the library was able to offer a financial incentive to departments integrating some resource-based activities in their courses, if staff were willing to think carefully about the resources that would be needed to support these activities.

It can be difficult to enforce an assertive policy over purchasing resources, but where routes have been found (often based on the provision of clear evidence of use - not just numbers but how and in what context) this has led to greater lecturer/librarian collaboration and better support for teaching and learning.

We have looked at several colleges where efforts are being made to develop information technology in the library in ways that support lecturers' aims and meets students' needs. One of these libraries had taken the main cross-college role in developing educational uses of IT. Their approach was based on assembling a wide range of information resources (from traditional and electronic publications to diagnostic materials and teachers' lecture notes). These are made available to students when at home, at work or in college, through a single access route provided on the college Extranet. This approach is working but it is a great deal to take on!

Elements of the same approach have been adopted in other colleges on a smaller scale: some have spent time creating more user-friendly subject gateways and building in helpful links inside and outside the college; others have worked on collaborative projects, trying to gain a firm grasp of curriculum content and assessment before integrating electronic access to sources of information into their work. It is interesting to note that in one case study college their initial focus was technological, trying to ease the difficulties students have when searching. However this was not very successful: the librarian later decided that the drive to become more effective needed to start at the collaboration end. His team has started building systematic contact and relationships with departments, encouraging a freer flow of information between librarians and lecturers, and understanding the demands of different courses. In other words, this college library has moved its main focus onto the next theme discussed here.

4   Liaison with academic staff

Undoubtedly, in many colleges liaison with teachers is a well established part of maintenance activity. What is the quality and focus of that liaison? One LRC Manager became concerned about the nature of the contribution of his staff in subject department and curriculum planning meetings. Suggestions for additions to booklists or about useful resources on a particular topic no longer seemed enough. This type of limited intervention encouraged the teaching staff to continue to see librarians in a reactive, support role and not as central to teaching and learning. His staff were encouraged to become more proactive in discussing the reasons for the students' use of LRC resources as well as the structure of assignments, jointly planning some teaching, considering how student research might be assessed and the library role in this. The process was challenging and required some staff development to enhance LRC staff confidence (even then, not everyone was suitable for the role). The dividends became obvious when lecturers were interviewed: many saw LRC staff as partners in developing new approaches to teaching.

On a much smaller scale, this time a one-person library in a sixth form college, the librarian concentrated on moving from a limited 'custodial' role by working with staff of one Department. After a year of occasional teaching of research skills on two courses, she has reached the stage of planning some team teaching with the Department Head. She has elected to continue working with this Department to build up her own skills and confidence before seeking to make links with other subject areas.

One of the most important relationships that should be fostered is with the IT Department. The respective roles of the library and IT in supporting student learning have to be clarified. Even in colleges where they are part of the same Faculty of Department, time should be spent in

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exploring how to work together, how different sets of professional skills can complement each other, and how collaborative projects might be run. It is extremely difficult to implement innovative uses of IT in the library without specialist IT support.

Teamwork and collaboration are high on the FE agenda. However, both require careful management if they are to be effective. It is important to decide when collaboration is the right way forward, who should be involved and what roles they should adopt. The changing environment is forcing colleges to adopt new approaches to supporting learning. Everyone involved with student learning is having to consider their contribution to the process. Librarians and teachers alike need to reflect on their unique or particular contribution to new partnership approaches. They also need to consider what ground is appropriate for partnership working: in some colleges collaboration is likely to be strongest in 'tradition' areas of resource management and provision (especially as these rapidly become less traditional with the advent of ICT); elsewhere the focus may be on teaching information skills together, or on joint curriculum design. Every college is different and it is reasonable to expect collaboration to take different forms. What should be common though, are a clear purpose and focus for collaboration, mutual respect and understanding of each others professional contribution.

5   Work within management structures

Strategic positioning within a college has been seen as critical to the success of the LRC. Touche-Ross, in a report on value for money in HE college libraries[28], asserted that: "the LRC is more likely to be effective in meeting the needs of clients… if the service is accorded a high degree of prominence within the institution…" Indicators of prominence include: the LRC sitting alongside academic rather than support services and the Head of LRC having equal standing with Faculty Heads and having significant and proactive input into planning processes.

The Manager of one of the case study libraries said that positioning was one of the main preconditions for real effectiveness. It might take years to achieve but was worth an outlay of concentrated effort. This view was echoed in a number of different colleges, where librarians have turned up to key meetings to which they have not been invited; inveigled invitations to all important meetings – and attended them all, once, to help them decide which they needed to be at; volunteered the library for a role within all high profile initiatives including being evaluated; and taken on a range of responsibilities (e.g. key skills and accommodation planning) which gave them a senior management presence. Librarians who wish to focus on improving their strategic role must accept that it can be immensely frustrating and discouraging and will take time – often quite a long time.

During our research we did find effective college libraries that did not have a strong presence within college management structures. However they tended to compensate with exceptionally good relationships with teaching staff and Department Heads and with high visibility at operational level. Development in this sphere needs a lot of careful thought.

6   Library space

In part one of the *Effective College Library* it became obvious that lack of space imposed enormous constraints on library effectiveness. New space can have a major liberating effect. Two of our case study colleges built new libraries during the life of the project. Interviews with lecturers and students in one of these colleges provided an insight into the power of a new, well-planned environment. Frequent mention was made of more purposeful student activity, less wilful disruption, high quality access to resources and better support. People now chose to use the LRC.

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[28] TOUCHE ROSS MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS *Learning resources Resource Allocation VFM study: summary report* London: Touche Ross 1995 [Report prepared for the HEFC Colleges Learning Resources Group.]

If a new LRC is being planned it will take up vast amounts of time and energy – however this is the one initiative which cannot be tackled on its own. Work will be required on library design but also on collaboration and strengthening relationships with subject departments. If the new LRC is to be effective, time and effort must be spent working with lecturers to build a shared vision of how the Centre will be used to support teaching and learning; this might even include discussing the layout. Where this consultation does not take place, lecturers will have no sense of ownership of the new LRC and are unlikely to build its use into their courses of study. (A survey undertaken in one college which was building a new LRC made this point forcibly, moving the librarians into a more consultative mode.) A new building and new approaches to collaboration must move forward together if increased LRC effectiveness is a desired outcome. This is also true when development is on a less ambitious scale, such as reorganising existing space to better meet a variety of learning needs, or working to better integrate other resource centres with what the central LRC has to offer.

7   Roles and skills of LRC staff

The search for increased effectiveness has led some LRC managers to take a radical look at the mix of skills needed in a modern LRC and the roles that might be adopted by their staff. In this scenario, nothing is taken for granted. Questions are posed about desirable levels of IT competence; the need for teaching skills; the relevance of subject specialism; the value and importance of traditional library skills; and which skills can really provide 'value added' for students and lecturers. Coherent programmes of targeted staff development have sometimes emerged from such programmes of questioning.

In one case study college this review of functions has led to the creation of a series of new Learner Support posts based in the library but so closely linked to subject areas that the subject lecturers themselves decide how the people in post should spend a proportion of their time. In another college the relationship between library and IT staff is being explored to see if more seamless ways of working can be evolved.

Often stereotypes need to be challenged – especially because students, lecturers and senior managers can, when consulted, present a narrow view of the librarian as resource organiser. (For instance, when the faculty heads of the college cited earlier were first asked about what the new Learner Support post-holders should do, they had only the most rudimentary ideas.) In libraries with only one or two staff, it can be crucial to consider which roles might lead to greater library effectiveness and how to restructure existing activity to take on new roles and so move in the desired direction. In larger libraries the spread of roles and levels of specialisation should be examined. Would it be effective to have one librarian solely devoted to providing assignment support (joint planning and resourcing of assignments and teaching groups of students relevant skills) as in one college? The matrix in appendix C was originally published in the report for Part 1 of this project. However, observation and discussion during this phase of the research has led us to present it again in the hope that it will be useful to those trying to become more effective through redefining the roles and skills of their staff.

Issues from the Case Studies

When we reviewed all of the case studies in this project, a number of themes recurred across our discussions with lecturers, librarians, college managers and students. Taken together they amount to a checklist for encouraging success in supporting teaching and learning through the Library or LRC:

➢ Effective and sustained **communication between Librarians, teaching staff and students** (using e-mail, bulletins and meetings) is necessary to share the vision, report on activity and progress and to tell people what is now available. This discourse will necessarily use the language of curriculum management and learning and will take account of the latest educational initiatives;

➢ **Robust IT systems** "that work and don't show you up" are required to enable all concerned to build up confidence, to avoid the frustrations of connection delays and to take full advantage of ICT. Separation of information and word processing functions is advocated to

avoid Librarians being sucked into low-level technical support work. A message from one Librarian was "push IT strongly; it is inevitable!" Advances were predicted in global electronic access; open learning via ICT; video conferencing and in web-based video lessons Intranet;

➢ Recognising how **IT advances** are affecting education. One College Principal posed the challenge strongly:

"Information Technology enables a lot of learning to take place that teachers are not able to facilitate (it broadens the range of options) but it must be done at a pace which allows it be used appropriately by staff and students: not to push ahead and find that there is no one there with you.

"Anyone under twenty is potentially a very different type of learner because of what they have been exposed to technologically. This gives rise to key questions:

Will we do practically everything on the Internet?
How will globalisation affect learning?
Should we radically adapt our teaching and learning strategies?"

For another Curriculum Manager's perspective on the skills needed for the future, here is a list offered by Jean McAllister of the Language Development Network at a recent FEDA Conference[29]:

<center>Skills for the future</center>

- To develop or adapt materials using a variety of media to suit learner needs

- To act as learning guides through a world-wide compendium of resources

- To help learners select, organise, and creatively edit resources from this compendium

- To help learners find appropriate sound, video and text files for original applications

- To manage electronic assets

- To transfer sound predogogy into new formats

She envisaged colleges getting the right mix by:

- In-house development through a multi-disciplinary team

- Collaborative approaches to develop materials, pool assets, share widgets

- Use of commercially available materials

➢ Rapidly advancing information technology is likely **to change the relationship** between Librarians and teaching staff, but a **managed** change is necessary to minimise friction and capitalise fully on the available ICT provision. A staff development manager in one of the more technologically advanced colleges commented:

"Staff are interacting and working with LRC staff more and asking LRC staff for help on computers. It is presumed that the LRC staff know about the Internet; there is less 'us' and 'them' now: there are changed perceptions. In the past they were seen as administrative support there for teaching staff benefit; now we are all in it together and they are at the forefront of student contact. The LRC staff have widened their role and kept up to scratch."
From the Librarian's perspective:

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[29] Further Education Development Agency Conference *The best of learning with ILT* London: 22nd March 1999.

"The LRC staff are having the biggest changes now and have had the biggest change. Their environment and roles have changed dramatically. A lot of staff development has taken place to keep up to date (with the technology): study skills support for students may require more training on tutorial support role.

"Teaching staff have done less development so far but are faced by more changes ahead. Some schools have integrated ILCT well into their teaching but many have not and use it for their own administration only. The changing technology will lead to a changing role of the teacher towards more individual support and groupwork."

➢ The **students** are also expected to be changed by increased information access but people were wary about making automatic assumptions about their IT competence. A librarian suggested that:

"IT relates to student life outside the college, therefore making it natural for students to learn, because a lot of them go on to computers at home automatically." However, a colleague pointed out that "There are some students who do not use machines regularly and do not have the skills. At the moment there are no exceptional demands on students because staff are only at a basic level. As staff build up expertise, expectations of students will increase and we must remember to train them!"

A head of school added:

"Students will be expected to do more work on their own and will need a wider range of skills. Research is needed to help us here. There will be more resources bases – staffed by teachers and others to help students outside contact time." He cautioned that

"16-19 year olds need the discipline of coming into an institution. They are not self motivators and therefore will not do it all from home!"

Making your choices

All of the options described here have worked in real colleges and we have seen many of them working. The key is to choose the strategy that is most likely to have real impact on teaching and learning in your setting. This will partly depend on the history of change at the college, the current college priorities and how the college sees the library or LRC. Once you have chosen your clear focus for development it is important to pick up on one of the issues already raised here, and communicate your vision.

Whenever the initiative we examined have been successful, there has been clear exposition at the outset of what was being attempted and why, even if this has changed over time. This process is important because it leads to prioritisation of development and maintenance activities, but also because it enables college managers and teaching staff to share the vision and support the work.

Finally, you need to be able to demonstrate that your chosen strategy is making a real contribution to the work of the college (or find out why it isn't working!). To be able to do this properly you need baseline information about the situation when you start and impact information that will show what you have achieved. We have explored the issues in choosing and applying impact indicators and targets elsewhere.[30] The effective college library should be able to show precisely how and where it is effective!

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[30] MARKLESS, S. and STREATFIELD, D.R. 'Developing performance and impact indicators and targets in public and education libraries' [accepted for publication in *International Journal of Information Management*.]

APPENDIX A

Learner Support Observation Proforma

Staff names   …………………………………………   Date   ……………………

………………………………………   Location   ……………………

………………………………………   Time   ……………………

Observer   …………………………………………

1   Activities to support learners

A.   Collects details and evaluates request for support from a user (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Welcomes user		
Checks for understanding of reque|		
Categories user needs		
Clarifies user needs		
Matches available information to learner needs		

B   Provides appropriate learner – support (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Provides verbal and/or written information		
Develops user skills (where appropriate)		
Checks for understanding		

C.   Identifies further learner needs (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Identifies further needs		
Monitors subsequent user activity		

E.   Manages an effective learning environment (summary)

Element	Comments	Grade
Intervenes appropriately		
Health and safety		

5   Feedback to staff

Good practice

Areas for improvement

Prioritised action plan

6   Staff comments (optional)

7   Grading

Grade given by staff ……………...   Grade given by observer ……………..

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Appendix B

Examples of pre- and post- intervention assessment questionnaires for completion by students
Finding and using information

Your name:

In questions 1 to 3, please tick the box that fits you best. For example, if you use computers a fair amount but not a lot, you might answer question 1 with:

Never   ✓   A lot

1.   I use computers:

Never   A lot

I_____I
|
|

1.1 In assignments I use computers:

Never   A lot

I_____I
|
|

1,2   Using computers, I am:

A beginner   Very expert

2.   I use CD-ROMs:

Never   A lot

I_____I
|
|

2.1 In assignments I use CD-ROMs:

Never   A lot

I_____I
|
|

2.2 Using CD-ROMs, I am:

A beginner   Very expert

3.　　I read the magazines in the Library:

Never　　　　　　　　　　　　A lot

　　　|_____|

　　　　　　　　　　|

　　　　　　　　　　|

　　　3.1 In assignments I use Library magazines:

　　　Never　　　　　　　　　　A lot

4.　　When I need information to <u>start</u> an assignment, I usually:

Use the Library catalogue and:　　　　Do other things:

Type in an author　　　　　　　　Ask the Librarian
Type in a title　　　　　　　　　　Look at the Library shelves
Type in a subject　　　　　　　　Write off to places
for information

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Anything else?

5.　　The main problems I have in finding information for this course are:

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire.

Tick <u>all</u> the boxes that show what you do when you <u>start</u> an assignment.

Sport and Fitness Assignment for GNVQ Leisure and Tourism

Your name

When you started this Assignment at the end of last Autumn you were given some help. We want to find out if this was of use to you.

We are interested in the session that you did on Search Terms and Topic Webs in class. We are also interested in the searches that you did in the Learning Resource Centre using a CD-ROM, magazines and the Internet.

1   Did this work help you to use the Internet better?

          Yes   No

1.1   If yes, how?

2   Did this work help you to use CD-ROMs better?

          Yes   No

2.1   If yes, how?

3   Did this work help you to use magazines and journals better?

          Yes   No

3.1   If yes, how?

Please return this questionnaire to.

Figure 1: The roles of the librarian: some choices

Librarian roles	Independent work	Co-operation	Collaboration
Teacher	♠ provide induction to library ♠ deliver one-off skills lessons ♠ give support for individual students	♠ deliver course-related information skills programmes ♠ provide IT workshops for teaching staff	♠ engage in team teaching on modules in or out of library ♠ help assess students' work
Adviser	♠ suggest resources needed or available for a course	♠ give feedback to teachers on student problems with assignments	♠ contribute to the debate on learning with resources, student problems with resources, strategies for coping ♠ providing information management input to SMT
Curriculum developer	♠ plan workshops in the library for staff or students ♠ offer resource support for new courses	♠ co-operate with teachers over planning assignments ♠ plan course-related information skills modules (accredited)	♠ engage in course design and assessment ♠ contribute to course review and evaluation
Materials design	♠ produce library/skills worksheets or software	♠ co-operate with technical staff (e.g. feasibility studies)	♠ develop front-end of IT packages ♠ create flexible materials/independent learning modules
Information resource manag	♠ acquire and manage library resources and other central learning resources ♠ ensuring adequate access to these resources	♠ acquire materials on behalf of departments/curriculum centres ♠ discuss acquisitions and purchasing priorities ♠ deploy library resources to meet specific course requirements	♠ allocate library budgets to departments ♠ work with departments/ curriculum centres to enhance college resources (e.g. IT networks

Take strategic management responsibility for college IT systems to support teaching and learning

PART E: The Learning Resource Centre/Library and the Curriculum

Some issues from the Effective College Library project[*]

The Effective College Library research project ran from 1995 to the Spring of 1999. The focus was on enhancing Library/Learning Resource Centre support for teaching and learning in FE.[31]

We have used 'LRC' and 'LRC Manager' to include
'Libraries/Librarians' below.

These are the key messages for **senior management emerging from this research:**

❑ The LRC can strongly help to:

> Widen participation
> Increase student retention
> Strengthen information technology-focused college development
> Support resource-based learning
> Teach information skills

❑ If the College is to benefit, a clear focus for development is vital. LRCs that try to be more effective across a number of fronts will fail to make a real impact on teaching and learning. LRC Managers must distinguish between maintenance planning and development planning

❑ To gain full advantage of the Information Age, the College should exploit its LRC as a powerful cross-college information resource

❑ If the College really wants to transform information support for teaching and learning, Senior Management must help the LRC to become more strategic. This involves:

- Achieving better communication between Librarians, Teaching Staff and Students (using e-mail, bulletins and meetings)
- Installing robust IT systems "that work and don't show you up"
- Helping LRC staff to recognise how IT advances are affecting Education
- Managing the changed relationship between Teaching Staff and LRC staff that will come with rapidly advancing information technology
- Fully recognising that students must also change to gain full advantage from greater information access – and that LRC staff can help here

❑ The LRC Manager must be able to show that the LRC is making a real contribution to teaching and learning. Most LRCs rely on traditional activity monitoring to demonstrate efficiency but these measures do not show how effective they are in key

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[*] This work was funded by the Library and Information Commission and the Further Education Development Agency.

[31] MARKLESS, S. and STREATFIELD, D.R. *The really effective college library. Report on Phase 2 of the Effective College Library project Library and Information Commission Research Report 51* Twickenham: Information Management Associates 2000.

areas. The project report shows how to create LRC impact and achievement indicators and targets.

What initiatives can make a difference?

Our project has looked in detail at ways in which several colleges have made a real impact on teaching and learning. These include:

> Individual student support/enquiry work
> Developing information skills
> Enhancing the range and quality of resources
> Liaison with academic staff
> Work within management structures
> Better use of LRC space
> Roles and skills of LRC staff

Two of our case studies will give some idea of the project range;

❑ One LRC took the main cross-college role in developing educational uses of IT. Because this project was LRC-driven and built on strong links with teaching staff it did not rely on 'techies' to guess what curriculum managers might need. The LRC team assembled a wide range of information resources (from traditional and electronic publications to diagnostic materials and teachers' lecture notes). These are made available to students when at home, at work or in college, through a single access route provided on the college Extranet.

❑ A college-wide resource-based learning initiative in another College is driven by Departments but relies heavily on the LRC to steer resources very specifically to their assignments and to provide study skills raining for students to enable them to cope with the demands of this way of working (whether the assignments are IT-based or not).

Not all of the initiatives were as extensive as these two, but they all point to ways of supporting teaching and learning that work. Full case study reports are available to show what worked, what didn't and why! Please contact us if you would like to know more about our work:

Contact details