

MANAGING THE MARKET PLACE: THE CONSORTIUM APPROACH

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The funding context of higher education is examined, together with some of the constraints and imperatives to which it gives rise. The history, constitution and operation of the Southern Universities Purchasing Consortium's Libraries Project Group are discussed. The paper closes with a discussion of possible future roles for purchasing consortia.

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The Higher Education context

We shall first illustrate briefly the funding context within which libraries in higher education institutions (HEIs) operate. The illustrative statistics cover the academic years 1983/84 - 1993/94, and are taken from the *LISU Annual Library Statistics 1995*¹. There are unfortunately two sets of statistics, one for 'old' universities, one for 'new', compiled for historical reasons on rather different bases. Despite these differences some trends common across the whole sector do emerge.

Historical statistics

Taking first the LISU table 'Summary Statistics of Old University Libraries - Great Britain' (Fig.1), the most striking factor is the rise over the period in student numbers from 326,000 to 523,000. This rise is accompanied by a (smaller) rise in the number of academic and academically related staff, from 55,000 to 73,000. Since the number of full-time equivalent professional library staff shows a slight fall, from 1398 to 1359, these must be chiefly teaching and research staff.

Taken together, these figures show a rise in the user population of 56%. The ratio of users (students and staff) to each member of professional staff shows an even higher rise, from 262 to 420, that is 60%.

Absolute expenditure shows some significant rises, particularly for periodicals, from £13.9m to £35.5m. However, if adjusted to take account of inflation and the rise in student numbers, the figures paint a very different picture. Total real library expenditure per capita shows a fall of 20% from £331 to £264 (1993 prices converted using the GDP deflator). The fall in real spend per capita is however much greater for books and periodicals. The real spend on books per capita (at 1993 prices, converted using the

TABLE 4.10 SUMMARY STATISTICS OF THE AVERAGE NEW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

		1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
New University Total Expenditure	(£m)	18.3	17.6	19.1	19.8	21.9	n/a	34.2	n/a	47.6	55.9	60.8
Library Expenditure	(£000's)	791	850	894	951	1,010	1,181	1,264	1,442	1,705	1,963	2,282
Library Spend as a % of Total Spend	(%)	4.3	4.8	4.7	4.8	4.6		3.7		3.6	3.5	3.8
People to be Served		9,012	9,009	9,338	9,608	9,807	10,298	11,106	11,958	13,697	15,426	17,026
Library Spend per Person	(£'s current)	87.77	94.35	95.74	98.98	102.15	114.68	113.81	120.59	124.48	127.27	134.03
Real Library Spend per Person	(1993 £'s)	148.40	151.89	146.03	146.67	143.72	151.19	140.29	137.56	133.58	131.39	134.03
Book Spend	(£000's)	145	141	153	151	166	184	192	226	266	306	421
Book Spend per Person	(£'s current)	16.09	15.65	16.38	15.72	16.79	17.87	17.29	18.90	19.42	19.81	24.75
Real Book Spend per Person	(1993 £'s)	31.80	28.61	27.21	24.60	24.65	25.31	21.91	23.65	21.65	21.51	24.75
Periodicals Spend	(£000's)	121	131	134	144	147	164	180	197	239	256	313
Periodicals Spend per Person	(£'s current)	13.43	14.54	14.35	14.99	14.87	15.93	16.21	16.47	17.45	16.57	18.40
Real Periodicals Spend per Person	(1993 £'s)	37.80	35.40	30.45	28.88	25.57	26.86	26.33	23.76	21.48	17.81	18.40
Bookstock	(000's)	294	305	318	317	325	343	354	362	350 ⁽¹⁾	356	467
Bookstock per Person		32.6	33.9	34.0	33.0	33.1	33.3	31.9	30.2	25.6	23.1	27.4
Issues	(000's)	257	264	286	298	300	324	351	402	461	530	614
Issues per Person		28.5	29.3	30.6	31.0	30.6	31.5	31.6	33.6	33.7	34.3	36.0
Professional Library Staff		708	705	667	676	690	664	684	705	754	777	817
People Served per Total Library Staff		163	164	171	173	179	185	193	212	204	221	218
People Served per Professional Library Staff		369	371	406	412	415	450	471	492	527	576	604
Annual Visits	(000's)						727	738	786	845	984	1000
Average Visits by each Person per annum							70	66	66	62	64	59

Data for all years refer only to 29 New Universities in England.
Particular Deflators are used:- GDP for Library Spend; Acadmic Book Prices for previous calendar year (Table 1.3) and Blackwell's Periodicals Price Index (Table 1.5).

⁽¹⁾ Includes abnormally low returns by three institutions

Figure 2

References

1. Sumsion, John; Creaser, Claire and Hanratty, Catherine. *LISU Annual Library Statistics 1995*. Loughborough: Library and Information Statistics Unit, Department of Information and Library Studies, Loughborough University, 1995 (LISU Public Library statistics report, 9), pp 121 & 141.
2. DJB Associates. *The Future of Electronic Information Intermediaries: a survey undertaken by DJB Associates on behalf of UKSG and JISC/ISSC*. [S.l.]: United Kingdom Serials Group, 1996, p71.