



Library Committee

Wednesday 17 February 2021, 10.00am
Web-conferencing meeting via MS Teams

Minutes

Present Members:

Dr Paul Ayris (Chair); Dr Simon Banks [from Minute 19]; Dr Richard Freeman; Dr Oliver Gerstenberg; Dr Liza Griffin; Dr Charles Inskip; Mr Ben Meunier; Mr Martin Moyle; Professor Vivek Mudera; Dr Jim Onyemenam; Dr Rachel Rees; Dr John Sabapathy; Dr Harriet Shannon [for Minutes 15-18]; Mr Andy Smith [from Minute 18.2].

Apologies:

Mr Ayman Benmati
Professor Diane Koenker
Mr Zak Liddell
Ms Kate Pearce
Professor David Price
Dr Hazel Smith

In attendance:

Mr Vincenzo Carrara (Finance and Business Affairs)

Officer:

Ms Olivia Whiteley

Part I: Preliminary Business

15. Minutes of the last meeting (2-01)

15.1. LC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020.

16. Matters Arising

Confidential: Opening hours in Library Services

16.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

17. Report from the Pro-Vice-Provost (UCL Library Services) (2-02)

- 17.1. The Pro-Vice-Provost (UCL Library Services) introduced the report on Library developments in the areas of the UCL Library Services Strategy 2019-22 since the last meeting of LC. The following key points were highlighted:
- a. Students in the School of Arts and Humanities and Social and Historical Sciences (SLASH) in particular were experiencing challenges accessing a number of resources during the pandemic. The Pro-Vice-Provost was liaising with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities who had asked whether there was opportunity for publishers to open up access to content free of charge until July 2021. Library Services had sent a list of some 170 resources to Jisc, who were engaging with publishers to request resource access to support Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and final year Undergraduate (UG) students in particular; the Pro-Vice-Provost awaited news on whether publishers would work with libraries in this way. Publishers had opened up resources much less during the current lockdown than previously, an issue compounded during the pandemic by the closure of libraries and pressures on library budgets.
 - b. Data from SCONUL 2019-20, used to benchmark the UCL Library against a number of other UK university libraries, showed that UCL was performing well and efficiently compared to its benchmark comparators. The UCL Library was by a wide margin the busiest Library in terms of volume of visits, which totalled over 3m for the year. While UCL's percentage budget spend on the Library was in line with the Research Libraries UK (RLUK) mean, from other benchmark data it was noted that information spend per full-time (FTE) student was lower than that of a number of benchmark partners.
 - c. The Pro-Vice-Provost expressed thanks to colleagues in Library Services for their fantastic work during the lockdown in which nearly all physical libraries with a bookstock had been closed due to the government restrictions in place. It was noted that without the additional £3.1m provided by UCL to support the Library's investment in e-textbooks, the Student Experience would have been at detriment.
- 17.2. During discussion, the following points were made:
- a. It was suggested to engage also the Dean of the Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences in conversations regarding Jisc's request to publishers to support access to resources in SLASH.
 - b. There was a comment that spend per FTE student was a powerful comparative figure in the context of setting a future vision for the Library.
 - c. In relation to the Library benchmark data, it was questioned whether Library Services had identified a reason why article downloads and e-book requests per FTE student were lower at UCL than at a number of its benchmark partners. It was noted that this may be because, while UCL

- made considerable investments in e-books, major efforts to support teaching through textbook investment had begun only recently. UCL figures were expected to increase and a further report would be brought to LC in the summer. It was suggested that Library Services undertake a communications exercise to raise awareness of resource availability.
- d. Both the Library's investment in e-books and the Scan and Send service implemented during the pandemic were welcomed. In respect of the latter, a comment was made concerning the current backlog of requests and that it was difficult to advise how long a request would take. UCL had granted capital funding of £51k to extend the Scan and Send service until July 2021. From 1 March 2021, the service would be extended to cover nearly every Library site, bar some difficulties accessing collections due to the locking up of sites during lockdown.
 - e. Notwithstanding the Library's comparatively low FTE student spend against benchmark partners, there was ambition and opportunity for the Library to undertake a flagship project as part of its future vision rather than seek only incremental investment in existing areas. It was noted that this should be considered carefully, with both a student and a research focus in mind and in consultation with both the student and research communities.

(Action: Director of Services (UCL Library Services))

18. The Library of the Future (2-03)

- 18.1. The Pro-Vice-Provost (UCL Library Services) presented the draft paper which was intended to provide a briefing to UCL's new President and Provost, Dr Michael Spence, on the purpose, role and challenges facing UCL Library Services as UCL emerged from the coronavirus pandemic. The draft paper set out a series of possible priorities for Library Services for the next strategy period, a number of which were highlighted as follows:
 - a. Noting that UCL Library Services was the most heavily used library service in UK Higher Education, and notwithstanding the costs involved in building the Student Centre to increase learning space, a key question was whether UCL should invest in a second such facility on the Bloomsbury Campus to support student satisfaction and the need for more learning space.
 - b. Given frequent feedback from Postgraduate Research (PGR) students concerning the lack of dedicated research space, particularly for PhD students in SLASH, another key question was whether the Library should prioritise working to progress discussions initiated by the Doctoral School about upgrading facilities and creating physical space for PGR students.
 - c. Another question was how to rescope the Science Library as a modern, cutting edge library space. Several £m had been invested in redeveloping the ground floor space in the DMS Watson Building as the largest PC

cluster for students in UCL, but this investment was not mirrored elsewhere in the Science Library.

- d. Lastly, given UCL's many special collection assets, many of which were off-site and difficult to access, it was questioned whether UCL should advocate for developing a partnership with the federal University centred on the creation of a national humanities facility combining Special Collections from both institutions.
- e. Continuing the Scan and Send service, introduced during the coronavirus pandemic and subsequently extended to all libraries, was highlighted as one of a number of smaller-scale priorities for the Library during the next strategy period.

18.2. A number of points were raised by LC during discussion, as follows:

- a. While each project merited funding, buy-in from the student and academic community was essential to their success. It was strongly recommended that the student and academic communities be consulted in order to gauge priorities for investment.
- b. There needed to be careful consideration of how spend per FTE student would translate into students' material requirements and how to balance this with investment in any flagship projects. It was noted that while spend may be less visible to students than it was to staff, it was nonetheless tangible. LC was reminded that budget setting was not currently linked to student numbers.
- c. In rescoping the Science Library, the Library needed to consider that its resources were used by a wide group including students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as well as SLASH subject areas such as Anthropology and Geography. It was suggested to take a view of the libraries in terms of intellectual connections between subjects, rather than as discipline-specific spaces.
- d. In response to a question regarding the development of a potential partnership with the federal University centred on Special Collections, it was noted that there was renewed support centrally within the University of London for the creation of a national humanities facility and appetite to engage with the other federal institutions. Across the federation, there was likely to be interest in the prospect of housing Special Collections in an accessible environment. While discussions were at an early stage, there was some thinking that costs would be met largely through external grant or philanthropic funding with some contribution from partners; it was feasible to expect that UCL's contribution would be equivalent to its current spend towards infrastructure and staffing at Senate House Library.
- e. It was noted that the federal university model had changed over time. Discussion of a project of the nature of a joint partnership with the federation had prompted some questions about the role of a central university in a federal system, and how the federal units, which were institutions in their own right, operated and interacted with the centre.

- f. There was support expressed for the creation of a national humanities facility in joint partnership with the federal University of London, in the form of a project based on a national claim with funding met largely from external sources.
- g. There was strong support for continuing the Scan and Send service, which had been very well received by the student community during the lockdown and would continue to be of particular benefit to students who were part-time, studying on a distance-learning basis or who had difficulties accessing the physical libraries for reasons of mobility or travel constraints. The UCL Institute of Education had previously offered a service similar to Scan and Send to its doctoral students, many of whom were less able to spend time in physical libraries due to distance and travel. Some of the most respected libraries in the country were noted to offer this type of service.
- h. There was support for the Library, in conjunction with the doctoral school, continuing to work towards fine-tuning provision of dedicated PGR study space to meet demands. On observation, PGR study spaces in Ramsay Hall had received more take-up than generic PGR spaces in the Senate House Hub; however, it was also noted that there had been some uncertainty around when the Hub spaces would open which may have impacted uptake. There was support expressed for addressing the current lack of private PGR spaces and alleviating pressures on bookable spaces, which were acute in some faculties, and for providing a range of spaces in order to accommodate solitary study and facilitate opportunities for student interaction. Feedback from among PGR students over recent years had shown that, while they appreciated centralised spaces, there was generally a preference for spaces within students' own faculties, in proximity to those colleagues with whom they undertook research.
- i. A question was raised as to whether there was an opportunity to connect UCL's Bloomsbury campus and UCL East via provision of a digital virtual space that would enable staff and students across UCL Faculties to work alongside one another remotely. In response, it was noted that Library Services had considered ways of integrating the UCL East libraries into the Library eco-system, including by creating a virtual network to link the community tangibly. Given that a number of UCL libraries existed off the Bloomsbury site, there was already a view to be taken of the Library as a community regardless of geographical location. As discussed by LC at its November 2020 meeting, the Director of Operations (UCL Library Services) was leading a strand of work under the auspices of the UCL Sustainable Physical and Digital Places for Education (SPiDER) working group to create an immersive, online virtual learning environment to replicate or livestream library spaces. Such virtual environments were gaining popularity at the global level as an educational tool, including at secondary school level, and it was possible that they would soon be among the expectations of UCL's future student cohorts.

- j. There was some support expressed for the development of an online virtual learning environment as a digital tool to augment physical resource, without replacing it, as well as a means to draw together the student community based across campuses in London and elsewhere.
- k. There was a suggestion put forward to include enhancing access to foreign language materials, which was not always optimal, among the Library's future priorities.

18.3. The Pro-Vice-Provost would develop the draft paper based on LC's advice and would report back on feedback from the Provost at LC's next meeting.

(Action: Pro-Vice-Provost (UCL Library Services))

19. Strategic Operating Plan 2021-24 (2-04)

- 19.1. The Director of Operations (UCL Library Services) introduced the paper, which set out the draft Library Services Strategic Operating Plan for 2021-24. The following key points from the three-year plan were highlighted:
- a. The draft Strategic Plan 2021-24 was underpinned by four Key Performance Areas (KPAs) priorities which were, broadly: User Experience; Sustainable Estate; Systems, Collections and Processes; and Communication, Outreach and Open Science. In addition to setting a number of larger-scale priorities, as discussed above [Minute 18], the Strategic Plan encompassed also incremental improvements to enhance the Library's benchmark results.
 - b. The Covid-19 pandemic had highlighted the critical importance of learning spaces and access to resources and had accelerated the Library's response to some new needs, such as via the introduction of the Scan and Send facility to deliver book chapter and journal articles from UCL's print collections to UCL students and researchers.
 - c. The student experience, increased e-book provision, continuation of the Scan and Send facility and development of a model for UCL resource provision on a per student basis were central to the priorities of the draft Strategic Operating Plan. It was noted that budget modelling based on spend per student had been a recurrent request made by Library Services for some years. The Library budget was still undergoing fine-tuning, but the plan set out a number of additional funding requirements for Library Services.
 - d. Library Services had received approval of funding for additional staff to manage the 400 temporary additional learning spaces created in line with social distancing measures during 2020-21. The Strategic Plan set out a requirement for additional staff to manage increased student space, regardless of whether social distancing continued into 2021-22.
 - e. The Library's strategic plan featured also the development of virtual online learning environments as an augmentation of physical resource, noting that this would not address ongoing demand for physical learning spaces.

- f. Enhanced spend on Special Collections and on a digital-first record management system was a central focus of the Systems, Collections and Processes KPA.
- g. Under the Communication, Outreach and Open Science KPA, the Library sought to prioritise both research support and the expansion of UCL Press in line with UCL's growth and to support UCL's assessment in the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
- h. Key challenges for Library Services during the forthcoming strategy period were highlighted as follows:
 - i. There was uncertainty as to the scenario upon which UCL's temporary operating model for 2021-22 would be developed and the implications for the Library.
 - ii. In July 2020, the Library's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee had published its 13-point Implementation Plan and a Liberating the Collections Steering Group had been established. Challenges highlighted through these activities included physical access to some libraries, which was made difficult due to the nature of the estate.
 - iii. Demand for learning space in the context of growth in student numbers over 2019-20 was a key challenge for the next academic year, especially if social distancing measures were to remain in force.
 - iv. Housing UCL Special Collections, which represented a space requirement of around 2,000 sqm, also presented a challenge. An options appraisal with UCL Estates was underway which included developing UCL's preliminary discussions with the federal University to create a national humanities facility.

19.2. A number of observations were made by members of LC as follows:

- a. In relation to the budget model, there was a risk observed should baseline costs stay static. The Library needed to make clear in its strategic planning that student numbers had increased and that this increment needed to be reflected in the budget by a step change in investment. It was suggested that the Library continue to work on understanding the correlation between the increase in student numbers, cost pressures and thresholds for step change.
- b. The importance of Scan and Send provision in particular should be emphasised, as this service had been so well received during the coronavirus pandemic. It was hoped that increased investment in the service would lead to reduced waiting time for turnaround of requests.

20. Physical learning space for academic year 2021-22 (2-05)

- 20.1. The Director of Operations (UCL Library Services) introduced the paper, which had been produced in response to requests made at the last meeting of

LC to set out more clearly the Library's plans to address learning space needs in the 2021-22 academic session. The following key points were highlighted:

- a. Space usage over the first term of 2020-21, which had seen increased usage in absolute numbers and average occupancy of library spaces of over 80%, was taken as the basis for the paper. Despite closing many of the library spaces during the government-imposed lockdowns, there was still ongoing demand for physical learning spaces on campus and the Library had increased capacity in those spaces that remained open or had been opened up to provide study space.
- b. The main space requirement anticipated for the rest of 2020-21 was for in-person group workspace. UCL Estates were exploring the feasibility of making unused teaching rooms usable for groups of students in bubbles.
- c. Three broad scenarios, based on assumed numbers of registered students, were being modelled to inform UCL's operations in 2021-22. These could be summarised as follows:
 - i. A return to on-campus settings as before the pandemic would require all library spaces to re-open and the creation of an additional 400 study spaces, for example, by retaining usage at 1-19 Torrington Place and Ramsay Hall.
 - ii. A return to on-campus settings with 2m social distancing would require substantial augmentation of an additional 4,450 study spaces, equivalent to no fewer than six Student Centres. While this scenario remained a possibility, it represented an enormous challenge for the estate.
 - iii. A blended approach, with a percentage of students returning to campus and a percentage of students studying remotely, could be met by the existing library footprint provided that no social distancing measures were needed. With social distancing enforced, an estimated additional 1,500 study spaces would be required.
- d. There was a need to consider learning space provision in the longer term on account of recent increases in student numbers.

20.2. During LC's discussion, the following points were addressed:

- a. In response to a question, it was noted that the three scenarios considered by the Library in the context of provision in 2021-22 had originated from UCL Planning and were underpinned by contextual factors that were not detailed in the paper, such as possible government restrictions on travel that may impact students' ability to come to UCL campus. They were broad scenarios and the Library expected to have greater clarity as to their shape in the next month, as discussion of UCL's temporary operating model progressed through UCL's structures of executive leadership and governance.
- b. There were concerns as to how space provision would be met should teaching via live content be a principal mode of delivery in the context of students largely returning to on-campus settings. Students navigating between online activities and face-to-face activities on campus could not

necessarily be expected to travel off campus to attend a livestream lecture, which would place pressure on the Library estate.

- c. In response to a question, it was noted that UCL Estates were considering a range of solutions including the possibility of expanding UCL's footprint in Bloomsbury through acquisition or through pop-up spaces.
- d. As a result of possible space pressures, there was some support generated across UCL for swift implementation of digital learning environments to augment UCL's provision. LC noted that to roll this out at pace might require an urgent decision to be taken on funding.

21. Open Science and Scholarship (2-06)

21.1. The Pro-Vice-Provost (UCL Library Services) presented the paper, which represented the culmination of 18 months of work by the League of European Research Universities (LERU) on a series of recommendations for member universities in their implementation of Open Science based on their shared learning. The following key developments in the UCL context were highlighted:

- a. UCL was one of the most advanced LERU universities in terms of its Open Science programme. Despite this, there were some question marks as to how UCL would continue to progress its Open Science agenda in the post-Brexit context.
- b. There were significant challenges ahead in implementing the European Commission's ambitious endeavour for a European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), the purpose of which was to bring together global research data into one portal. With an estimated half a million core data experts required to deliver the EOSC vision, and limited funding opportunities available, the Pro-Vice-Provost stressed that the EOSC would need to increase its engagement with university networks in order to co-create solutions.
- c. The UCL Office for Open Science and Scholarship, launched in October 2020, would assume the role of a coordinator for Citizen Science activities across the institution. This office would focus on three objectives to deliver Citizen Science more soundly, summarised as follows:
 - i. Work with UCL Faculties and establish faculty representatives to identify Citizen Science initiatives on the ground at UCL;
 - ii. Progress opportunities to work with the London Borough of Camden to create a Citizen Science office for London, taking the example of Barcelona as a model for this kind of collaboration;
 - iii. Develop a kitemark for the skills and infrastructure required to be a Citizen Scientist.
- d. A recurrent question, as previously discussed by LC, concerned whether UCL could move to an Open Access model of publishing in which authors would be motivated to publish in UCL Press over other options such as research journals. It was suggested that UCL could be at the forefront of disruptive thinking and action by moving to this model, with the key benefit of making publications widely and openly available to the student body.

- 21.2. During discussion, the following comments were made:
- a. While there was support for academics retaining the choice of where to publish, there was praise for the UCL Press initiative as a significant opportunity for UCL researchers. The academic community needed to be made aware of the benefits of publishing with UCL Press in order to encourage take-up.
 - b. The importance of engaging universities with the EOSC across disciplines at the granular level, with an understanding of different disciplinary approaches, was stressed.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

22. Project bidding in UCL Library Services (2-07)

- 22.1. LC received the termly summary report on the Library's progress in project bidding applications.

23. Reports from Library Working Groups (2-08)

- 23.1. Since the last meeting, LC had received the following minutes of Working Groups that report to LC:
- a. Bibliometrics Working Group – 12 October 2020;
 - b. Open Science and Scholarship Committee – 29 June 2020;
 - c. Press and Publications Board – 27 May 2020 and 18 November 2020.

24. Reports from Faculty Library Committees (2-09)

- 24.1. Since the last meeting, LC had received the following minutes of Faculty-level or Faculty Library Committees (FLCs) that report to LC:
- a. Arts and Humanities and Social and Historical Sciences Joint Faculty Library Committee – 18 November 2020 (unconfirmed);
 - b. Engineering Sciences Faculty Teaching Committee – 20 November 2019, 26 February 2020, 18 September 2020, 7 October 2020, 21 October 2020, 16 November 2020, 6 January 2021 and 20 January 2021.

25. Date of the next meeting

- 25.1. The next meeting of LC was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 2 June 2021 at 10.00am-12.00pm.

Olivia Whiteley
March 2021