COLLABORATION BETWEEN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES:
A CASE STUDY OF THE SCONUL ACCESS SCHEME

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Abstract

**Background.** The literature demonstrates that collaboration is of ever increasing importance to academic libraries. Past research focuses on bibliographic and licensing consortia.

**Aims.** The study sought to test the hypothesis that collaboration between academic libraries in the UK is strongly upheld and valued through the SCONUL Access scheme.

**Methods.** The library website for each of the SCONUL Access members was analysed. The initial website data collection helped to inform the questions for a questionnaire, which was sent out to a staff contact at each library. There was a 53% response rate.

**Results.** The website analysis demonstrated that 23% of libraries do not provide information about the scheme on their website, and that too often libraries use language that is unfamiliar to their users. The questionnaire results found that 95% of librarians see the SCONUL Access scheme as having a positive future, and 86% see collaboration as more important today than it was five years ago. Part-time and distance learners are seen as benefiting the most from the scheme. There is debate over whether the scheme is used to its full potential, as a result of the scheme not being publicised enough. Some librarians demonstrated an unwillingness to advertise the scheme for fear of its overuse.

**Conclusion.** It is concluded that academic libraries do have a strong belief in the benefits of the SCONUL Access scheme, and in collaboration more widely. Suggestions made include increasing the promotion of the scheme, including making improvements to the website; a review of the electronic resource provision; and a discussion between libraries to determine the direction of the scheme in the future. Further research could investigate the opinions of academic library users in relation to the scheme.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

During the 1990s “perhaps the most important development for academic libraries...has been the move from organizational self-sufficiency to a collaborative survival mode as personified by the growth of library consortia” (Allen and Hirshon, 1998: PAGE NO). Library collaboration and cooperation have long been traditions, and given the nature of what libraries do, it seems natural that they would work together (Mosher, 1989). With the advent of computers, and more recently with the development of the Internet, the possibilities for collaboration have grown. The combination of increasing journal and database subscription costs, reduced library budgets, rising student numbers, and the increasing volume of material that is published each year, have meant that academic libraries can no longer own as large a proportion of the whole literary output as they once did (Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002). Allen and Hirshon (1998) summarise the difficulties well as: “reduction in funding, emerging changes in the publishing industry, the rapid growth of information technology, and emphasis on improving the quality of service” (cited in Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002: 206). As a result, Anglada (2007) argues that since the 1970s cooperatives and networks of libraries have become increasingly prevalent as academic libraries came to realise “that there was a threshold beyond which it was impossible to increase services within the limits of a single organization” (Anglada, 2007: 411). Whilst this dissertation will focus on academic libraries in the UK, the importance of library collaboration can be seen around the world. O’Connor was informed by an unspecified book supplier that “the percentage of annual US published output in ARL libraries has fallen from around 75 percent in the major libraries to just over 50 percent” (O’Connor, 1999: 267).
1.2 Context to the study

This dissertation will investigate how collaboration has changed and developed within the academic library sector since it first began to gain prevalence in the 1970s. The review of the literature will take a broad overview of the current state of collaboration both within the UK and internationally: investigating the types of collaborative ventures that libraries are involved in, how successful these schemes have been, and why collaboration remains of high importance to academic libraries. The future of collaboration will also be considered. The SCONUL Access scheme, as set out below, will be taken as a case study. The size and scope of this scheme make it a good example of academic libraries working in collaboration.

There are many ways in which libraries can benefit from collaborative ventures. The National Electronic Site Licence Initiative (NESLi2) is an example of a very successful national electronic site licensing consortium, in which libraries have linked together to place pressure on publishers in order to achieve a lower price for subscription packages. The consortium estimates that this collaborative venture has saved academic libraries a collective 40 million GDP since its inception in 2004 (NESLi2, 2011). The sharing of resources is an obvious way in which academic libraries can cooperate with each other. The inter-library loan (ILL) scheme is one example where, with the help of the British Library, resources are lent to specific users that require them at another institution. The SCONUL Access scheme aims to provide students and academic staff with access to more material than their home institution can supply them with alone. Neither the ILL scheme nor the SCONUL Access scheme is specifically aimed at undergraduate students, although some institutions may decide to permit undergraduates to use these schemes, at their own discretion. The pressures placed by undergraduates on resources are not the same as those placed by postgraduates and academics. Undergraduates require multiple copies of similar core texts, therefore providing them with additional resources is seen to be a lower priority.

Every university in the UK and Ireland is a member of the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL website, 2011). The major national libraries, and many of the UK’s higher education colleges are also members; there are a total of 178 member libraries. SCONUL’s Website states three core principles, one of which is a commitment to “promote the sharing and development of good practice” (SCONUL website, 2011). Among many things, SCONUL represents the needs of academic libraries, negotiates deals with publishers, and heads the reciprocal walk-in access scheme, which allows staff, postgraduate students, and part-time and distance

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1 Previously called the Standing Council of National and University Libraries
undergraduate students to borrow from other similarly included university libraries (Langley et al., 2006). The SCONUL Access scheme works as a “reciprocal access scheme, granting borrowing privileges to many types of library users working or studying at participating higher education libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland” (SCONUL Access, 2011). In order to maintain the high standard of cooperation that a positive collaborative culture requires, it is essential that all libraries feel that their contributions to projects such as SCONUL Access are worthwhile. This reciprocation is the driving factor for all institutions that are part of the scheme, although inevitably some institutions may gain more from the schemes than others. Langley et al. (2006) argue that, for collaboration to work, the conditions and benefits need to be reciprocal to all participating libraries.

The SCONUL Vacation scheme acknowledges that undergraduates need to have access to a study space when they are away from their institution. The issue of providing enough space for their users is a problem at many libraries, especially as collections develop and expand, and student numbers increase. This dilemma is particularly faced by libraries that are limited to the same building or space that was built for a considerably smaller student population. Furthermore, there is an increased trend by students to work at the library rather than at home (REFERENCE). The reasoning behind the SCONUL Vacation scheme is that by allowing undergraduates to access academic libraries close to their home address this works to make the distribution of students relatively even, as students in effect simply swap location with their contemporaries at their parallel institutions. By contrast, however, the purpose of the SCONUL Access scheme is defined as aiming to widen access to materials, rather than that of providing more places in which users can study. This dissertation will consider the importance of these issues in more depth: what different libraries perceive as being the important factors, whether there is agreement between the institutions, and how they see the SCONUL Access scheme developing in the future.

Before the move to online resources, any external library user would have the same, or almost the same, access to materials that an institution’s home students and staff would have. However, as libraries are increasingly disposing of back copies of journals, and often opting for online-only subscriptions to new issues, the print collections are diminishing. The SCONUL Computing Plus scheme was piloted for the academic year 2002-3 (SCONUL, 2011), and is now in full operation, with libraries that are part of the scheme offering external users walk-in access rights to use their electronic resources. Access is, however, restricted to publications where the licence permits external users to use the resources (Access SCONUL). However, where external users are accessing other academic libraries their requirements will differ depending on whether they are in need of resources that their own institution’s library does not hold, or if they are simply intending to use the
library as a study space. The latter group are catered for, where they have their own lap-tops, by Eduroam (education roaming): a “secure, world-wide roaming access service” which allows users to login to their home institution through this network (Eduroam, 2011). Eduroam is in itself a collaborative, reciprocal project between higher education institutions around the world. Eduroam is an international scheme, which is run in the UK by JANET, the Joint Academic Network. However, while this project demonstrates the benefits of successful collaboration, these users are not actually accessing new resources through this route. For external library users who are not a member of staff or a student at another institution, and for external users requiring resources that their home library does not stock, the decrease in print material and tight licensing restrictions are reducing the amount of material that can be accessed (Anderson, 2010). Consequently, by providing Eduroam, academic libraries have the capability to provide external users with access to their work space through the SCONUL Access scheme. However, the extent to which libraries are eager to promote this potential side of the scheme is unclear. This dissertation will seek to understand whether libraries are keen to promote this side of the scheme.

1.3 Summary statement

The changing environment for academic libraries has increased the need for them to collaborate with one another. The economic constraints that libraries are increasingly facing are set against a backdrop of increased user expectations, and ever increasing acquisition costs. Consequently academic libraries are forced to find new ways in which to collaborate if they are to continue to provide their users with a good service. The changing and ever widening electronic environment has facilitated many collaborative ventures, but it has also demanded them. Academic libraries can no longer expect their users to view them as essential; libraries must demonstrate their worth, and strong collaborative schemes might be a positive way in which libraries can show that they remain relevant, innovative, and united.

Previous studies of library collaboration have tended to focus on licensing consortia, and on the sharing of catalogues and bibliographic information. Much of the research was conducted during the 1990s, when the library field was changing rapidly. There has been little investigation into how librarians perceive collaboration. There have been no studies that have specifically focused on the SCONUL Access scheme, either from a user or from a librarian perspective. The findings of this research project should assist those who are closely involved in administering the scheme.
1.4 Research aims and objectives

This research aims to investigate the collaborative behaviours of academic libraries in the UK and to determine how librarians see collaboration developing in the future. In order to establish this view, the SCONUL Access scheme will be used as a case study. The provision of information relating to the scheme will be investigated. The opinions and attitudes of librarians in relation to the scheme will be explored.

These objectives will be achieved by establishing the following:

- How much the SCONUL Access scheme is promoted by universities through the library pages on their respective websites.
- Whether or not librarians feel that the SCONUL Access scheme is used to its full potential.
- How librarians feel that the SCONUL Access scheme, and collaboration more generally, will develop in the future.
- Whether librarians feel that collaboration is becoming increasingly important in today’s adverse economic climate.
- Which other collaborative schemes SCONUL Access members are involved in and which schemes they find to be most advantageous.
- Who benefits most from the SCONUL Access and Vacation schemes: postgraduates, distance learners and placement students, (reference only) undergraduates, or academic staff.
- Whether libraries from different types of institutions (eg Russell Group), and of varying sizes, approach the scheme in different ways, and whether this influences librarians’ attitudes.

The SCONUL Access scheme is an example of a large and important collaborative venture. The scheme is based on reciprocity, whilst allowing individual libraries to retain autonomy over who they permit to use their library, and how and when they do so. SCONUL Access is also an example of a highly visible collaborative scheme – one that academic library users should be aware of. It also provides an opportunity for academic libraries to demonstrate how they are maximising access to resources for users.
1.5 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 2 is the literature review for this dissertation, and it considers what collaboration means both as a concept, and within the library environment. The literature review evaluates how library collaboration has developed since its inception, and investigates how successful collaboration is deemed to be. Chapter 3 sets out the methodological approach that has been taken for this study. Chapter 4 outlines the results of the study, with Chapter 5 discussing the findings in relation to the literature. Finally, Chapter 6 is the conclusion.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Scope of the literature review

This literature review is structured into seven sections: defining the concept of collaboration; the context to this study; the emergence of collaborative practices; types, models and examples of collaboration; the positives and negatives of collaboration; collaboration and the future; and finally an explanation of how the findings from the literature review point towards the decision to use a case study in this research project.

Much of the material used in this literature review was written during the 1990s, when collaboration became a greater force within the library field. In particular, much of the literature from the 1990s considers the importance of automated catalogue records, and of publisher licensing consortia. Later material from the 2000s has also been considered, where their approach takes more of an overview approach, considering consortia in the broader scheme of libraries and their users more generally. The majority of the literature takes the form of academic commentary rather than primary research.

The literature for this study was gathered through a combination of database and citation searches, catalogue searches, library shelf browsing, and the following of sources referenced in the bibliographies of initial material found. The databases that were searched included Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), Web of Science, and Emerald Management Reviews. The search terms “collaboration”, “co-operation”, and “consortium” were used interchangeably. Boolean operators were used to combine search terms, and the search terms were truncated, as appropriate, in order to obtain the widest volume of material.

This literature review will include international literature as a way in which to contextualise collaboration on a wider scale than simply that of the activities going on in the UK. However, SCONUL itself is a UK and Ireland based organisation. The SCONUL Access scheme in its current form has existed since 2007, having previously existed as two separate schemes: SCONUL Research Extra (SRX) and UK Libraries Plus (UKLP). The first of these schemes was aimed at academics.
and postgraduate research students, and the latter was for the remaining student groups (SCONUL Access, 2011). Now that the scheme has been in place in its current form for four years, it seems timely that the scheme be reviewed.

2.1.1 Defining collaboration

Within the literature there is some debate as to the difference between the terms collaboration and cooperation. Anglada (2007) argues that collaboration is where there are working relations between departments within a library or university, whereas cooperation can be external to the library and involves the sharing of resources. Furthermore, Anglada states that “fraternisation” links organisations “of the same type and nature in other countries” (2007: 407). However, this view is contrary to the majority of the literature, which sees collaboration as existing between libraries, more than it does within academic institutions. In his academic commentary in 1989, Mosher argued that collaboration is the taking of action; the term implies the explicit making of a commitment, and it is therefore a step on from cooperation which can be viewed more as an environment of goodwill. Cooperation may involve the setting of common goals, but collaboration is to work together towards these goals (Mosher, 1999; Shepherd et al., 1999; Kajberg, 2002).

The term “consortium” is defined by Kopp (1998) as the “co-operation and collaboration between, and amongst, libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources” (cited in Nifla and Darko-Ampem, 2002: 203). For the purposes of this dissertation consortia will be seen as the task group that has come about as a result of a commitment to collaborative action. In this sense collaboration will be seen as the verb, consortia as the pronoun (O’Connor, 1999). Within the literature there are two strands of thought. The first, and arguably more prevalent, approach views collaboration as existing for the purpose of resource sharing and collection development: “‘Library Consortia’ refers to co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration between and among libraries for the purpose of sharing information resources” (Moghaddam and Talawar, 2008).

The second definition of collaboration takes a broader approach, including any group projects or agreed practices that are taken up by libraries as a collective (Carr, 2008). This research will use the term collaboration to refer to this second argument, with the view that libraries need to do more than just share resources in order to provide the best service that they can. The SCONUL Access
scheme is an example of where collaboration is taken further than simply focusing on the resources themselves, by including the human side of allowing users to use other library services and spaces, rather than simply supplying an Inter-Library Loan (ILL), for example.

2.1.2 The context

There is consensus within the literature that libraries cannot exist in isolation, especially in relation to collection development and retention (Moghaddam and Talawar, 2008; O’Connor, 1999; Eden and Gadd, 1999). Mosher (1989) argues that it is a natural instinct for libraries, particularly large academic research libraries, to want to be self-sufficient with a “comprehensive collection”. However, not only is this unachievable, it is counterproductive for libraries to think in this way. In their academic commentary and research Allen and Hirshon (1998) argue that the 1990s saw a change when academic libraries, existing as “self-sufficient” entities, moved to a model of “collaborative survival”. This change was in part a consequence of the emergence of the Web, with users developing higher expectations of being able to access material from around the world. With the increasing cost of tuition fees, students are increasingly seeing themselves as customers and consequently expect a much wider range of resources. Coupled with this, the number of students has grown substantially (in the UK at least) since the 1990s. Student numbers in Higher Education have more than quadrupled in recent decades. From around 100,000 full-time equivalent numbers in the 1960s, they reached just under 2 million by 2007 (Dearden et al. 2010) and 2.49 million by academic year 2009/10 (HESA, 2011). The steep rise in acceptances that led to the quadrupling of numbers began around 1991 (Dearden et al. 2010).

At the same time as increasing student numbers, the tendency of students to buy their own copies of core texts has significantly fallen (Carr, 1998). Both of these factors have placed considerable pressure on libraries to provide more copies of many texts, and a wider range of resources (Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002). Academic staff, too, have higher expectations of being able to access all the information that they need, as increasing demands are placed on them to meet institutional and governmental targets for research publication output. For example, in the UK the Research Excellence Framework (formerly the Research Assessment Exercise), as well as increasing focus on impact factors, has placed more pressure on academics to increase their research output.

Yet against this backdrop, as the volume of published information rapidly increases each year, the cost of journal subscriptions has become increasingly unaffordable, as prices rise above the rate of inflation. At the same time, library budgets are being cut around the world. In the UK the future of
academic funding is very unclear, and nationwide cuts are already being made across institutions. The reduction of library budgets is not a new phenomenon, as Nfila and Darko-Ampem (2002) argue, with library budgets suffering since the 1990s, and once the library resource budget has been shrunk it is very difficult to ever grow it again. O’Connor (1999) argues that libraries themselves no longer hold the power that they used to within an institution, as the Internet has reduced people’s belief in the need for libraries at all. The library budget is too often seen as an easy place for universities to save money. Consequently, anything that libraries can do to help themselves and each other to meet user demand is essential.

2.1.3 The emergence of collaborative practices

The culture of co-operation between libraries is not a new phenomenon. In 1886 Melvil Dewey wrote about “library co-operation” in the Library Journal (Kopp, 1998, p7. Cited in Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002: 204). Mosher (1989: 29) argues that a “co-operative spirit” has existed, at least in the USA, between libraries since the early 1900s, and that this culture has become ingrained within the librarian profession, and “co-operative collection development in one guise or another has long been a part of both that spirit and that enterprise”. The issue of the need for library co-operation was on the agenda for the American Library Association’s “The Library of Tomorrow” symposium in 1939, as brought to the table by R.B. Downs with his paper “One for all: a historical sketch of library co-operation, 1930-1970”. From the 1960s onwards the increased prevalence of automated procedure, and the rise of computer use, meant that for library es around the world co-operation became both possible and increasingly important as libraries and librarians were able to share resources, share their expertise, and agree on best practice (Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002; Westmoreland and Shirley, 2004; Dugdale, 1999).

Potter (1997) gives two reasons as to why academic libraries form consortia: the most important and dominant reason is the “sharing of physical resources”, and the second is that of “identifying and addressing common needs arising from developments in information technology” (cited in Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002: 205). Allen and Hirshen (1998) argue that collaborative ventures accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s. These consortia sought to do one (or more) of three things: facilitate the sharing of resources, negotiate the price of subscription deals for publications and electronic systems, and reduce the cost of library operations such as cataloguing and indexing by working together to reduce the duplication of effort (Allen and Hirshen, 1998).
2.1.4 Types, models and examples of collaboration

The most prevalent form of library collaboration is the aforementioned collection development consortium. However there are many types of collaborative venture. Allen and Hirshon (1998) argue that libraries have many potential partners with whom they might seek to work, but that most fall into one of three categories:

1. “Information providers, such as publishers or abstracting and indexing services, do for us that which we cannot or should not do ourselves...
2. “…Service providers, such as book and serial vendors or contract cataloging providers, do for us that which we would do if we could do it at the same cost...
3. “…Libraries working together to do more than we can do alone… desire to engage in resource sharing or to reduce some common costs. The electronic information marketplace has grown so rapidly, and the costs of entry are so high, that no one library can afford to face the technical or economic hurdles alone” (Allen and Hirshon, 1998).

Walters (1987) argues that there are two purposes of collaboration: economic and non-economic. The economic perspective assumes that libraries cannot purchase all the material that they require, but that, through consortia, libraries can provide a more complete service to their users. The non-economic perspective is the view that the larger and wealthier libraries “have a responsibility to address social issues such as the widening gap between the information rich and the information poor. These beliefs can compete with each other, or at least be a source of tension or conflict, and, ultimately, this tension can negatively affect consortial outcomes.” (Walters, 1987, paraphrased in Maskell, 2008: 165-6). No-one but Walters has referred so explicitly to the need to redress the balance but the point that individual libraries will be able to contribute different amounts to a venture, and that the needs and expectations of libraries will vary and will need to be addressed, has been acknowledged. Westmoreland and Shirley (2004: 55) argue that, by its very nature, collaboration inherently helps to “level the playing field of information have and have nots.”

There is consensus within the research literature that collaborative activity operates on a spectrum (Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002; Cutright, 2000; O’Connor, 1999). Whilst it might be argued that collaboration starts with a commitment to cooperate, “there is a broad continuum from highly decentralized organizations to highly centralized ones.” (Allen and Hirshon, 1998: 37). “The degree of centralization of a consortium is the primary factor affecting not only how member institutions interact with each other, but also the relationships with external parties (such as contractors, vendors, or publishers)” (Allen and Hirshon, 1998: 38). Centralised consortia tend to mean that
individual players have less autonomy, there may be dedicated staff for the scheme, and it is more likely to have a sponsor. Allen and Hirshon (1998: 39) categorise types of consortia into four groups: “loosely knit federations, multi-type/multi-state networks, tightly knit federations, and centrally funded statewide consortia.” Whilst these groups were applied to the USA model, the categories can be similarly applied to a British setting. For example, the SCONUL Access scheme would fall under the third category: individual libraries retain some flexibility, the scheme focuses on one type of library (academic and research), and the scheme has a staff that “coordinates program development, but does not really control that program.”

Relaxed informal agreements and goodwill can be beneficial, but for larger ventures a proper agenda is needed (O’Connor, 1999). O’Connor (1999: 269) argues that there are four models of collaboration: “off the top”, where libraries work together towards a single specific goal through the pooling of resources. An example of this is the OhioLink scheme in the USA, where “each of the academic libraries in that state [Ohio] was given an innovative system on the condition that resources would be shared across the system using the computer system”, although a problem with this model is the lack of central funding. The second model is the “get on with it”, and is represented by the way in which Australian universities operated in 1990s. This is where a sum of money is granted for a fixed term by an external body (for example, the Government) to launch a project, and the Institution is expected to continue on its own budget afterwards. The third model is “let’s help ourselves”, and the fourth is “do it our way”, a prime example being the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), an organisation that has led many innovative changes in education and research in the UK (Carr, 2007; Rader, 2002).

Much of the literature on this topic focuses on the need for collaboration for collection management (Pilling, 2000). However, another major area in which libraries have seen much collaborative behaviour is that of shared classifying, cataloguing, and system management. The Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL) is a clear example of bibliographic collaboration. CURL was formed in the UK to share catalogue and bibliographic information, in part as a response to the relatively recently computerised databases that were becoming available. CURL began as an informal venture when the Universities of Cambridge and London joined with Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1982. The scheme was aimed at tackling the issue of “transition to machine-readable cataloguing in those major research libraries” and required the sharing of data (Carr, 1998: 277). CURL existed until 2008, when it became Research Libraries UK (RLUK). Among other projects, as CURL they sponsored Copac, an online catalogue comprising these records, which has become “the de facto UK Union Catalogue”, and thereby an important example of UK library collaboration. This
collaborative scheme demonstrates how complex the structure can be of collaborative schemes forming further consortia from within their broader scope, as CURL sponsors SHERPA, which in-turn has been involved in projects such as the Electronic Thesis Online System (EThOS) and Intute. In the wake of the formation of CURL the Joint Academic Network (JANET) was created by the UK University Grants Committee (later the Higher Education Funding Councils) “to link the computer centres of all the UK universities. This provided access to the bibliographic records of one library by another.” (Nfila and Darko-Ampem, 2002: 207). This example shows that, where libraries can show an initiative to be important, they can demonstrate to external bodies that there is a need for funding (Carpenter, 2011).

The work of CURL, and later of RLUK, can be seen as clear examples of successful collaboration in the UK; as early as 1989 the CURL database had over two million bibliographic records, and has continued to grow since then. As well as functioning as a way for research libraries to share their knowledge and work, from 1986 onwards the scheme has also been a driver of good library practice, in terms of cataloguing standards – both in terms of the metadata itself, and also in terms of making positive computing decisions. In 1986 CURL bid for funding from the then University Grants Committee, to enable the “formal” establishment of the “consortium’s developing database to be formally established in the University of Manchester Regional Computer Centre (UMRCC), and for the migration of data to a newer and more powerful system (Carr, 1998). In the constantly changing environment of technical and electronic advances, it is more important than ever that libraries themselves are involved in driving the future changes: if libraries do not lead the way, and help to decide how things will be done in the future then someone else will do it instead; libraries will lose more of their power and their opinions will be increasingly overlooked. A positive collaborative venture improves the reputation of those libraries involved and that of their institution, enabling libraries to provide a better service and, on occasions, leading to further funding and other projects (Wilding, 2002). Publishers and service providers respond in part, albeit for economic gain, to meet the needs of libraries in providing them with new services and products. Collaboration attracts “donor funding”, and it encourages external bodies and companies to suggest services, deals, projects and so on. Where libraries are big players with a loud voice, it is harder for universities, funding councils, publishers, and ICT service providers to overlook them, and subsequently this can be reflected in protection of funding (Marsh, 2005; Wilding, 2002).

Copac is heavily used with over 30 million bibliographic records; the number of people that use Copac each day has rapidly increased each year since 1996, with over 690,000 different sessions recorded during November 2009 (Copac, 2011). There is much discussion of bibliographic and
subsequent ILL collaborative sharing and lending projects in the descriptive analytical articles, and in the practitioner reports (Constantin, 1998; Arenas et al., 2000). Copac also demonstrates the popularity of collaboration of this nature within the library community. For the first upload of bibliographic data to the system, and then again for the second phase, so many libraries applied to be part of the project that the RLUK had to conduct a selection process. The Copac venture also demonstrates the ways in which collaboration can exist across the sectors, as many public libraries are also involved in Copac. As with SCONUL Access, Copac is an example of a user-facing collaborative venture. The collection management consortia such as NESLi2 and the RLUK tend to exist behind the scenes where users are unaware of their existence and contribution. With Copac and SCONUL Access, on the other hand, users are often keenly aware of their roles. Bibliographic collaboration has become a worldwide phenomenon; The Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC), based in Ohio, USA, is an example of worldwide collaboration of this nature. The practitioner literature demonstrates that bibliographic and resource sharing consortia are being developed around the world, based on the same principles as in the UK (Alemna, 2002; Constantin, 2008).

2.1.5 The positives and negatives of collaboration

Collaboration in itself is not guaranteed to be successful. In their practitioner viewpoint articles Hiscoe and Baker (2004; 2006) argue that many initiatives in libraries and in the wider academic community have been introduced, only to be disbanded as a result of funding cuts or lack of good leadership and continued commitment to making sure that the ventures could survive in the long-term. To be collaborative libraries need to see collaboration as an active role, and not allow themselves to be passive. Collaboration is about what libraries do, and with whom; it should not be viewed as something that happens to them (Shepherd et al., 1999). When entering into consortia those leading their library into an agreement or programme need to ensure that they have enough backing from their home institution, and they need to be in a strong enough position themselves to represent their library fairly and strongly, and carry their library behind them with full support. A badly managed consortium can confuse libraries, suppliers and users, and can lead to duplication of effort and wasted time and money (Moghaddam and Talawar, 2008). Strong leadership is vital (O’Connor, 1999). Within the consortium itself there needs to be agreement and understanding of the various expectations and skill sets contributed by different institutions. As their libraries enter into consortia, librarians need to be flexible in how they work, in their approach to how others work, and in realising that goals may need redefining as the scene changes (O’Connor, 1999).
O’Connor (1999: 268) argues that larger organisations do not always like the restrictions that come with being part of a collaborative organisation, “indeed they sometimes seek to spoil and delay the wider group’s plans.” O’Connor goes on to warn that libraries must not enter into a consortium lightly, for each consortium will cost a library money in one way or another, whether this be staff time, or through direct funding. However, in an effective collaborative venture all members recognise that “each library has different pressures and resources” (O’Connor, 1999: 266). However, in a successful consortium all members will find the results to be beneficial, even if the benefits are different for each library. For example; “the financial pressures of the large library are compensated to some extent by the smaller paying for access to resources which they would not have otherwise afforded” (O’Connor, 1999: 266). Moghaddam and Talawar (2008: 96) argue that issues such as “poor technological infrastructure, economic, cultural barriers, and separation of effort” can also be problematic.

All members of a consortium need to be fully committed to collaboration as a method in order for success to be possible: “its members must have a high degree of respect for, and deep-seated recognition of, the value of increased collaboration” (Allen and Hirshon, 1998: 36; Massie, 2000). Furthermore, consortia evolve as relationships and situations around them change. Each collaborative organisation has to revamp its image every once in a while “in order to stay vital and relevant” (O’Connor, 1999: 268).

A criticism that has been made of licensing consortia is that they are disadvantageous to smaller publishing houses that cannot compete in the same way to offer the same way that the large ones can (Anderson, 2006). This can certainly be argued as a major problem for small publishers; inevitably, as has been witnessed by the researcher, when financial savings have to be made the smaller publisher deals are easier to cancel. Cancelling a subscription to a single journal or database, or to a small publishing deal, is a relatively easy thing to do. Although the money saved may be negligible, unfortunately these deals do not carry as much weight as the large publisher packages that contain many essential resources. Furthermore, these large package deals often tie libraries into longer contracts than do contracts with the smaller publishers. Alexander (1999) has argued that consortia banding together can almost be viewed as “a reverse-cartel because these independent consortia come together not to limit competition or fix prices, but to leverage their collective power to open up the market”.

15
2.1.6 Collaboration and the future

Without collaboration, many important and innovative developments would not have taken place. Collaboration is vital for the future of libraries, not only as individual institutions, but as a profession as a whole. The literature is united in this view. However the future of collaboration is much less certain. Current schemes and ventures need to continue to work hard to maintain their high standards, and to adapt to changing circumstances. Furthermore, new projects need to be thought-up and introduced: libraries need to continue to be proactive in driving future change. Carr (2007) argues that JISC is an excellent example of collaboration, as a body that is internationally recognised for their influential work within research and educational developments. Emerging at a time of great uncertainty, when no-one knew quite how electronic developments would develop in the library and publishing fields, as an independent semi-collaborative body, JISC was able to drive new and innovative projects, many of which other organisations would not have had the confidence or power to initiate on their own. For this reason, collaboration is essential because it allows for the trialling of new ideas, and brings good publicity to those libraries which are involved in the projects (Carr, 2007; Milne, 2002; Kajberg, 2002).

As Allen and Hirshon (1998) argue, collaboration can come in different forms. Collaboration in libraries is not simply about the sharing of published resources; effectively managed repositories, primary sources, and data can be shared as well. Lots of things need to be considered: core resources, an institution’s own scholarly works, primary sources, and data. While at the moment many of these data are shared in an unstructured manner, libraries should see themselves as having a role in developing this process further (Hazen, 2010). Libraries need to move away from the idea of “owning” their own resources and think of themselves instead as providers of information, and collaborate in terms of identifying the authority and credibility of sources (O’Connor, 1999). Librarians need to realise that “digital resources behave differently than hardcopy objects” (Hazen, 2010: 120).

2.1.7 Why a case study was chosen

Maskell’s (2008) study of library collaboration was based around interviews of thirty librarians in Canada. The study found that almost all respondents were in agreement that collaborative ventures are positive in helping to build relationships between academic libraries, and that engagement in a successful collaborative project made librarians view other libraries more favourably. Maskell’s study
leads into the present SCONUL Access survey: it’s important that librarians are behind the scheme, and it’s important to understand how librarians feel about the scheme and how they interpret its use. There is much discussion of how collaborative policies came about, why they are needed, and what they have been. However, there is less debate over of how successful these schemes have been, and even less on how these ventures are likely to continue to exist. While everyone faces reduced budgets, and staffing levels are low, collaboration should be higher than ever before, but instead it could easily go the other way. This study shows that it can be very beneficial to take a case study approach, so as to understand a particular scheme in depth, and through this to ascertain the wider implications of the scheme in question. By using a case study questions can be specifically targeted towards certain aspects of collaboration.

As Allen and Hirshon (1998) argue, while collaboration is important for future library developments, and for the retention of current successful service provision, in times of economic difficulty, collaboration is ever more important, but also more likely to come under threat. Consortia need to be fluid and continue to develop, even during these difficult economic times, and to prepare the library scene for the future (Carr, 2007; O’Connor, 1999). The SCONUL Access scheme is an already well established scheme that one would hope can survive the current economic climate.

2.2 Definitions of groups and bandings

Academic institutions in the UK have formed groups that reflect their research to teaching focus, their user group, and to some extent their history. The Russell Group and the 1994 Group are seen to be research intensive institutions, whereas Million Plus, University Alliance, and the Ukadia Group tend to focus more on teaching. The full list of members for each of these groups is listed in the appendix. There are also a number of institutions that are unaligned to any of these groups.

The SCONUL Access scheme is divided into four bands. Band A is for academic staff, Band B is part-time and distance learners, Band C is postgraduate students, and Reference Only is for full-time undergraduate students. Reference-only access is only permitted at libraries which allow Band B users.
3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The SCONUL Access scheme is an exemplar for library collaboration in the UK and Ireland today. The scheme, which was previously made up of two separate schemes, SCONUL Research Extra and UK Libraries Plus, has existed in its current form since 2008. In order to investigate the current scheme it seemed important to research how the scheme is portrayed to its potential users, and from this to establish what the views are of the relevant librarians. Consequently, this research takes a broad overview approach to investigating the scheme. Given that the scheme is already in existence, and that the literature suggests that collaboration is a popular approach for libraries, a theory testing approach has been taken, where the research starts at the conceptual-abstract level, and through the use of deductive reasoning the empirical level can be ascertained to establish the method (de Vaus, 2001).

Within the social science ontologies are assumptions about the way in which the world around us functions. Following on from this, epistemological assumptions direct the context within which we approach the task of understanding particular topics, be they the analysis of practical documents, or the gathering of peoples’ attitudes and behaviours. “Positivism is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond” (Bryman, 2008). For the purposes of this study the ontological assumption is that the way in which libraries and their staff and users behave is fixed and can therefore be statistically analysed (Cresswell, 2003). The underlying theoretical assumption is that collaboration between academic libraries is a positive and valued feature within the service. This assumption will be tested, and the extent to which collaboration has increased or decreased will also be investigated.

However, Henn et al. (2009) argue that “the distinction between positivism and interpretivism as two polar opposites is somewhat artificial” – it is actually more of a spectrum, with positions such as empiricism and realism lying in between. During the 1990s the limitations of positivism were acknowledged by positivists, and the paradigm was revisited and revised to sort out its imperfections; this new approach became postpositivism (reference).
However, on its own, positivism has its limitations. Interpretivist approaches are not without merit. Yet the two are not necessarily polar opposites. For the purposes of this study, a mixed method strategy has been adapted, which reflects these similarities and suits the different. Pragmatic Knowledge Claims combine the above theories, allowing for more flexibility; ontological assumptions from both sides are accepted, where applicable to the different parts of the research, taking on a mixed methods approach to methodology. By using a mixed methods approach, the limitations of both types of research are reduced.

The method will take a deductive approach, with theory directing the study; the theory throughout the research rests on the challenge of testing the hypothesis. “Collaboration between academic libraries in the UK is strongly upheld through the SCONUL Access scheme.” Deductivism is the perspective that uses theory to develop a hypothesis, which can then be tested (Bryman, 2008; Cresswell, 2003). In order to test, or as Popper would argue, to disprove the hypothesis (Henn et al., 2006), a mixed-method approach will be taken.

3.1.1 The Hypothesis

Disproving the hypothesis: “Rather than seeking evidence that is consistent with our theory we should seek evidence that provides a compelling test of the theory.” (deVaus, 2001: 11). De Vaus argues that researchers need to try to eliminate “rival explanations of the evidence” and seek “evidence that could disprove the theory” (2001: 11). Popper also argues of the importance of attempting to disprove one’s hypothesis, with the premise that if one cannot disprove a theory then one may assume that the hypothesis is accurate (Henn et al. 2006). By investigating attitudes towards the scheme from librarians in the questionnaire, and then investigating the way in which the same libraries put forward the scheme to their own students and to potential visitors, the hypothesis can be tested in two different ways. The hypothesis for this study is: “Collaboration between academic libraries in the UK is strongly upheld through the SCONUL Access scheme.”
3.2 Methodology

The methodology for this study will use a mixed methods approach, using a concurrent triangulation strategy; two methods for collecting primary data will be used at the same time (Cresswell, 2003: 214). The first takes the form of document analysis, the second is a questionnaire. The two approaches will remain separate until the point of data analysis is reached. Although Cresswell (2003) argues for the benefit of using quantitative data collection for one approach, and qualitative for the comparative method, neither of the methods used in this study fall neatly into just one category. The document analysis, through the examination of library websites, takes a mixture of factual and less tangible data from each website in turn, to produce more quantitative data. The questionnaire asks predominantly closed ended questions, but also includes more open ended questions asking for further detail, the answers to which are then codified to again produce quantitative data. Yet, despite the resulting predominantly quantitative data set, the individual responses themselves are based on both objective and subjective approaches. The website analysis, although conducted from an empirical perspective, with clearly defined classifications for grading, is ultimately subject to the bias of the observer, with first impressions playing an important part. The questionnaire’s closed questions ask participants for factual information relating to their service provision, as well as for their opinions about the scheme and the way in which it is used.

3.2.1 Website Analysis

Website analysis was conducted to establish the extent to which members of SCONUL Access promote the scheme to their own users and to visitors, what policies they have implemented, and how encouraging their choice of language is. Specifically the criteria can be categorised as follows:

Information for home users:

- How easy the information relating to the SCONUL Access scheme is to find
- How clearly the scheme is explained to home users, both in terms of the purpose of the scheme, and in terms of how the scheme works
Information for visitors:

- How easy the information relating to the scheme is to find
- How welcoming the language is
- Whether walk in access is provided, and whether Eduroam is mentioned
- Whether SCONUL Vacation is mentioned, and whether it is provided

Website analysis is akin to document analysis, and provides an effective way in which to establish the way in which the SCONUL scheme is put forward to users and potential users, because the information comes directly from the source. The material is already publicly available and has not been created for the purpose of this study, therefore the aims and objectives of this research do not have any influence on what is written on these web pages (Henn et al., 2006: 113). Document analysis is the process of reviewing and critiquing existing material, so as to establish the ways in which policies and procedures are undertaken. The benefit of this method is that it is arguably highly valid, given that the material has not been created for, or with an awareness of, the study and can therefore depict a “truthful” picture of reality (reference).

The original intention was for the website analysis to be conducted prior to the creation of the questionnaire, so as to provide a basis on which to form the questions. This was achieved in part, however the website analysis took longer to complete than was originally planned for, and consequently the questionnaire was informed from preliminary website findings, more in the way that the literature review informs the survey: as an understanding of the material that different libraries provide, their focus, and the way in which the service may be perceived.

3.2.1.1 Criteria and Piloting

Each library website was assessed against the same criteria (for criteria, see appendix). The sites were analysed blind to the responses to the questionnaire, so as to prevent the questionnaire responses from biasing the researcher. Each library was randomly assigned a number, and the websites were then analysed in numerical order, so as to reduce the potential for bias.

Before launching into the full website analysis, a pilot was conducted of eight different academic library websites so as to identify any problems with the criteria. In this instance piloting proved highly beneficial, as it identified several important areas where the analysis criteria needed to be altered. The first finding was that some of the categories were too vague to assess empirically, without introducing more specific criteria. For example, assessing how “welcoming” a site is, in order
to improve reliability, the criteria were made more detailed; a score of 3 was awarded to libraries that used the word “welcome” or similar to express an element of warmth to visitors, or where they provided additional information to potential visitors – such as maps and explanations of how to use their resources/catalogue. A score of 1 was given to libraries that used phrases such as “resources are first and foremost intended for use by our own students”, and where they listed their rules and regulations directly below the SCONUL Access information. Where libraries fitted into neither category they were awarded a score of 2. The pilot also demonstrated that measuring the number of clicks from a library’s homepage to information about SCONUL Access was not enough on its own, it was also important to assess how easy the relevant links were to find on the site. For example, although it may only require one click to get a home user to the SCONUL Access pages, if the link itself is simply named “SCONUL” then the user is reliant upon a prior knowledge of the scheme. The eight library websites used in the pilot were later revisited, in order that they could then be fairly included in the full result set.

3.2.1.2 Sampling

Identifying the relevant population to sample was straightforward for this study; in order to obtain the maximum amount of data, all of the libraries that subscribe to the SCONUL Access scheme were included in the sample. As X argues, the larger the sample the better the data set. 186 university and college libraries are registered with the scheme (SCONUL, 2011), and this number seemed to pose a manageable task within the time frame allowed. By using a complete data set the results can be analysed in a variety of ways, so as to compare and contrast the differences between types of institutions and their approaches to the scheme. However, when the list of SCONUL participants was examined more closely it became clear that some of the libraries are part of a joint alliance, and therefore need to be considered as one body. Therefore the final number of institutions that were identified for inclusion in this study was 162.
3.2.1.3 Methods of data analysis

The resulting data from this study are in a quantitative form, with each library being awarded a score for each criterion. The results were statistically analysed using dedicated statistical software (SPSS-IBM Version 19), involving graphs and cross tabulation. The data were codified in a way that allowed for direct comparison with the results from the questionnaire, with each academic institution being labelled with the same number for both the questionnaire and the website analysis.

3.2.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire aimed to establish the way in which the SCONUL Access scheme is administered by the different libraries, and the opinions that librarians have of the scheme and of collaboration more generally. A questionnaire was a good approach for this study because it can be distributed to a large number of people, and the data can be statistically quantified (Cresswell, 2003; de Vaus, 2001).

3.2.2.1 Questionnaire Design and Piloting

The “Survey Gizmo” platform was used to host the questionnaire. This site was recommended by fellow students, and having filled out other surveys it looked to be the best one to use. Questionnaires created using online tools tend to gain good response levels, because they can be sent to numerous people, they are easy for respondents to complete, and they are straightforward to create (reference). These online survey platforms allow data to be reviewed as they come in, so that progress can be monitored, and tools are provided that can export the data to a variety of formats. Given that all of the listed contacts had email addresses it can be assumed that staff at all academic libraries have access to the Internet, and can therefore access the survey.

The questionnaire gathered both qualitative and quantitative data, through the use of open and closed ended questions. “A good questionnaire should include a mix of closed, open and scaled questions.” (Henn et al. 2009). When using closed questions, Henn et al. (2009: 163) argue the importance of ensuring that questions are both mutually exclusive and exhaustive. Piloting the study helped with this, ensuring that each question adhered to these two criteria. The pilot was conducted with the help of three librarianship student peers, all of whom have worked in an academic environment, and have dealt with SCONUL Access enquiries at some point. Their feedback relating
to the questionnaire was positive; the questions were quick to answer, and there were no questions where they found the answers given to be too restrictive or to overlap (Henn et al., 2009). One suggestion, based on finding such an approach to work in their own study, was to add the final box at the end of the questionnaire so as to allow participants to add any further comments about either the survey itself or the study more generally. This question provides a free space for participants to add further comments on the SCONUL Access scheme and collaboration more generally, with two suggested topics provided as “Do you value the scheme?” and “In what ways do you think the scheme could be developed or improved further”. Through the survey, respondents could also comment if they found any of the questions to be unclear or to be inappropriately leading in their nature. By including additional space for participants to expand on their answers, the problem of not knowing whether they had understood the question adequately was averted, as this would become clear in their answers.

All ten of the “main” questions were given in mandatory fields, whereas all of the subsidiary questions – which supplemented the question to which they were attached – were optional. Quantitative analysis provides useful data that can then be effectively statistically analysed, and generalised more broadly. Boragatti (1996) writes of the important criteria for creating a good questionnaire. Therefore the questions were direct and without ambiguity; each question attempted to deal with just one issue, avoiding asking two questions in one; and leading questions were avoided. Given the population of the sample, reference to specifics such as the different SCONUL bands were acceptable, given that the participant has already been acknowledged by SCONUL as knowledgeable on the subject of SCONUL Access. Arguably, the quantitative questions were given more weight in this method, because these were the compulsory questions, so only some participants chose to answer the questions. The shorter and easier a questionnaire is to complete, the higher the response and completion rates are likely to be (reference), therefore the survey was kept to a total of ten questions, all displayed on the one page. The questionnaire can be viewed in full in the appendix.

3.2.2.2 Sampling

As with the website analysis, the population that was targeted to complete the questionnaire was the complete body of SCONUL Access members. The SCONUL Access website has a list of all members, and provides the email address for the SCONUL contact for each of the participating institutions: the questionnaire was therefore emailed to each of the contacts. In the hope that as
many librarians as possible would respond to the questionnaire, each email was addressed personally to the potential participant, in an attempt to personalise the dialogue and hopefully further encourage participation. The email explained why the subjects had been approached, the field of research, what would be involved in taking part, the ethical declaration, and contact details for any enquiries into the research (see appendix). A follow-up email was sent to those that had not responded to the first email, again asking for their participation (see appendix). The emails were sent from a university email address, so as to reduce the likelihood of the email being marked as spam, and thereby ignored.

3.2.2.3 Ethics

Before completing the questionnaire all respondents were provided with information about the research project. At the start of the questionnaire the participants were asked to read the information relating to the project, and all participants ticked the box that said they were giving their informed consent. There was no potential risk of harm to participants; the nature of the surveys were objective and impersonal. In order to ensure confidentiality for all participants each institution was assigned a unique identification number, known only to the researcher. In reporting the results, the institutions will be grouped together, so that the individual libraries cannot be identified.

3.2.3 Response Rate

The questionnaire received responses from 87 academic libraries, out of a total of 162, thereby producing a response rate of 54%. The survey was open for responses for three weeks, with a reminder sent to participants on the Tuesday afternoon of the third week. The reminder email led to a considerable uptake of the survey, with 34 responses in the final three and a half days of the survey. The larger the sample size, especially in relation to the target population as a whole, the more that can be learnt and consequently generalised from the results. The respondents reflect participating libraries from each of the different academic groups: Russell Group Universities, the 1994 Group, the Million+ Group, the University Alliance, and Further Education Colleges. However, although 54% is a positive response, generalising too much from these data must be avoided, because they are still only a reflection of part of the total population.
The sample population were contacted on July 18\textsuperscript{th} 2011, a time when many libraries are busy with readying themselves for the year ahead, and when lots of staff are on annual leave. Therefore, in hindsight, distributing the survey at an earlier stage might have resulted in a higher level of participation.

3.2.4 Method of Data Analysis

In order that the data can be effectively analysed and compared alongside the data gathered as part of the website analysis, the same scale. The Likert scale will be used to analyse questions 6 and 8, and a numerical scoring scheme has also been applied to the other questions. The open ended questions will be codified and analysed with the aforementioned numerical data.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS Version 19. The data are presented in the form of values that represent counts of responses, usually accompanied by percentages within the relevant group. Where there are comparisons based on analysis of one variable according to the values in another variable (cross-tabulation), statistical analysis using a hypothesis test was undertaken and the P value set out. The test used for these contingency tables was the (Pearson) Chi Square test (Campbell, 2009). The conventional significance level (alpha) of 0.05 was used; where P values were less than 0.05 the finding was deemed statistically significant. Findings where the value of P is greater than 0.05 are considered ‘not statistically significant’, with an acceptance that the finding may not be a true finding but may well have arisen because of sampling variation.
4 Results

This Results chapter will describe the two major components of the research project: the website appraisal and the survey of university librarians. It will then set out results derived from the combining of these two sets of data. Most of the data were collected in a quantitative way; where qualitative data are presented they will be included alongside quantitative analyses.

4.1 Website Analysis

The completed Website analysis comprised 162 academic libraries’ pages. The library Website for each of the institutions listed on the SCONUL Access Website was included in the original sample. Six websites were, however, subsequently excluded from analysis because they were merging with another institution, or their representative responded to the survey request email to inform me that they were no longer taking part in the scheme, or because the library did not appear to have a Website.² For the purposes of the analyses below, 100% will refer to the 162 libraries whose Websites were analysed.

Tables 4.1 to 4.4 describe the 162 universities according to four important characteristics: their affiliation with similar universities into peer groups; their proportion of postgraduate students; their size as judged by total student numbers; and their geographical location.

Table 4.1: Universities according to peer group affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 Group</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Million Plus</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Alliance</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Colleges, FE Colleges, and Ukadia Group</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Institutions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaligned</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² The six that were excluded were numbers 16, 65, 106, 144, 150 and 153.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell Group</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 Group</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialist Colleges, FE Colleges, and Ukadia Group</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Institutions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaligned</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Universities according to proportion of students who are postgraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown or Not Applicable</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20%</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30%</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;30%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Universities according to total student numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥20,000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 19,000</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤9,000</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4: Universities according to location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East England</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>162</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1 Comparison of websites according to features of the universities

Scrutiny of the websites revealed that 37 library websites (23%) do not provide any information for their own users relating to the SCONUL Access scheme or, if they do, the information is hidden. A further 21 libraries (13%) mention the scheme to their home users, but provide no information about how to register. Thirty-seven libraries (23%) provide basic information on how to register, for example by featuring a link to the SCONUL Access website. More positively, 67 libraries (40%) provide proper information on how to register as a SCONUL Access or Vacation user.

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 investigate whether the provision of information to home, and then external users is related to the type of university. Overall the provision of information relating to the SCONUL Access scheme for home users on library websites is inadequate. Ninety-four libraries (58%) make the information easy or straightforward to find, but 31 libraries (19%) make the information difficult to find, and the remaining 37 libraries (23%) do not provide any information at all. The Russell/1994 Group libraries’ websites scored substantially higher than either the non-Russell/1994 Groups or the miscellaneous groups for home users; 30 of the 37 Russell/1994 Group libraries (81%) make their information easy or straightforward for home users to find, and just one library does not provide any
information for their home users. This high standard of provision of information was significantly better than that found for the universities in other aligned Groups (47%), or miscellaneous and unaligned universities (57%) (Chi Square test significant: P=0.006).

Table 4.5: Ease of finding information on the website, according to type of university affiliation: home users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: home users</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find information</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightforward or easy to find information</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.1%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi-Square Test: P=0.006

Library websites set out information about the scheme rather better for external users, although the picture is far from exemplary. Information was easy or straightforward to find on 109 (67%) websites, but 25 libraries (15%) make the information difficult to find, and the remaining 28 libraries (17%) do not provide any information at all. As with home users, the Russell/1994 Group libraries’ websites scored substantially higher than either the non-Russell/1994 Groups or the miscellaneous groups for home users; 32 of the 37 Russell/1994 Group libraries (86%) make their information easy or straightforward for external users to find. As before, this high standard of provision was significantly better than that found for the universities in other aligned Groups (59%), or miscellaneous and unaligned universities (65%) (Chi Square test significant: P=0.045).
Table 4.6: Ease of finding information on the website, according to type of university affiliation: external users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: external users</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find information</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightforward or easy to find information</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>86.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi-Square Test: P=0.045

Tables 4.7 and 4.8 explore the relationship between website information and the universities’ profile of postgraduate versus undergraduate students. No clear pattern, and no significant difference, is apparent – either for home or external students. One tentative observation might be that, in keeping with the earlier finding about research-intensive universities, the universities with the highest proportion of postgraduate students are the least likely to provide no information about the SCONUL Access scheme; no information for home users was provided by just 14% of universities with the most postgraduate students but by 23-31% of the other universities (Chi Square test not significant: P=0.554). Much the same pattern seemed to show for the provision of information to external users: no information for external users was provided by just 5% of universities with the most postgraduate students but by 16-31% of the other universities (Chi Square test not significant: P=0.421).
Table 7: Ease of finding information on the website, according to universities’ proportion of postgraduate students: home users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: home users</th>
<th>Postgraduate proportion</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightforward or easy to find information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.55

Table 8: Ease of finding information on the website, according to universities’ proportion of postgraduate students: external users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: external users</th>
<th>Postgraduate proportion</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightforward or easy to find info</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.42

Tables 4.9 and 4.10 examine the same website features according to the universities’ size. In this analysis there is a significant difference to be seen according to size of university – with similar findings across the home and external users. The poorest information is offered by the smallest universities, and the best by the medium sized institutions; the largest universities’ provision of information lies somewhere in between.
Table 4.9: Ease of finding information on the website, according to universities’ size: home users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: home users</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>≥20,000</td>
<td>19,000-10,000</td>
<td>≤9,000</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find information</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightforward or easy to find info</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.002
Note: Data on number of students were unavailable for 16 universities so excluded from the analysis

Table 4.10: Ease of finding information on the website, according to universities’ size: external users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: external users</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>≥20,000</td>
<td>19,000-10,000</td>
<td>≤9,000</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to find information</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straightforward or easy to find info</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.068
Note: Data on number of students were unavailable for 16 universities so excluded from the analysis
4.1.2 Ease of access to the SCONUL scheme

On the websites there was a general tendency to place the information relating to the SCONUL Access scheme under headings such as “Using the library” and “Library services”, with information for both home and external users held under these titles. A number of libraries also displayed the information for external users under “Information for visitors”, and for home users under “Using other libraries”; information contained under headings such as these was usually the easiest to locate, where a clear website structure was apparent – and the link to the SCONUL pages, or discussion of the scheme, was easy to find from there.

On average, users need to click on two links in order to get from the library homepage to a page with information about the scheme; this was found to be the case for information provision for both home and external users (Figures 4.1 & 4.2)

Figure 4.1:

![Number of clicks to get to information for home users](image-url)
Although an analysis of the length of the pathway from the library homepage to the information about the SCONUL Access scheme provides an interesting comparison, the number of clicks alone is not a valid or complete demonstration of how easy it is to find the information. For example, where there is a link on the homepage entitled “information for visitors”, even if the user must visit several pages, the path is clear and easy to navigate. With this in mind, the length of the pathway was evaluated on a scale of 1 to 3, where 3 meant that the material was very easy to find, 2 that the material was straightforward to find, and was 1 given for sites where the information was difficult to find. It emerged that 45 (28%) of the libraries made information relating to the scheme easy for home users to find, and 46 (28%) of the libraries made the information easy for external users to find. However, only 21 of the libraries (13%) that made the information easy to find for one type of user also made the information straightforward to find for the other type of user. Surprisingly 20 libraries that made the information easy or straightforward for external users did not provide any information relating to the scheme for their own users. On the other hand, 10 libraries made the information easy or straightforward for home users to find, but provided no information for external users. Not providing home users with information, but going to the effort of providing external users with information on the scheme seems an odd way for a university to run their part of the scheme.
Twenty of the library websites (12%) use wording for home users that is not clear to people who do not already have some knowledge of SCONUL Access or library procedures. For example, many people will not know about Inter-Library Loans or understand exactly what is meant by “reciprocal responsibility”. However, 54 libraries (33%) use language that is clear, and 51 libraries (32%) take the effort to avoid using library terminology and discussing complex procedures, and where they do use such language they are careful to provide an explanation of what it is that they mean.³

In the website analysis 7 libraries (4%) were found to use negative wording that might put off potential external users. For example, they state in blunt terms that their library is predominantly for the use of their own students and staff, or they list rather off-putting rules and regulations directly next to the information concerning using the library. By contrast, 36 libraries (22%) use welcoming language, such as “we welcome all visitors”, or provide additional information for potential visitors. Ninety libraries (56%), however, sit between the two; providing external users with the facts, and nothing more.⁴

4.2 Questionnaire analysis

All of the participant librarians (100%) ticked to confirm that they gave their informed consent to participate in this study. The questionnaire received responses from 87 libraries, constituting a 53% response rate. Of the sample, 16% have a smaller proportion of postgraduate students than the national average, 59% have an average number of postgraduate students, and 15% of respondents have a higher proportion of postgraduate students than the national average (Table 4.11). The remaining 9 responses (10%) came from institutions where the postgraduate student numbers were unavailable or not applicable, for example Irish universities, and further education colleges. The sample was made up of 13% Russell Group respondents; 10% 1994 Group; 18% Million Plus; 14% University Alliance; 14% specialist colleges, further education colleges, and Ukadia group; 5% Irish institutions; and 26% unaligned institutions (Table 4.12). Table 4.13 shows the profile of the responses according to the size of the institutions.

³ The remaining 23% are those libraries for whom information relating to SCONUL Access for home users either does not exist, or cannot be found
⁴ The remaining 18% are those libraries for whom information relating to SCONUL Access for external users either does not exist, or cannot be found
Table 4.1: Universities in the questionnaire survey, according to proportion of students who are postgraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postgraduate proportion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown or Not Applicable</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;30%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Universities in the questionnaire survey, according to peer group affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russell Group</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 Group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Million Plus</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Alliance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist Colleges, FE Colleges, and Ukadia Group</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaligned</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Universities in the questionnaire survey, according to total student numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number students (2009)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥20,000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 19,000</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤9,000</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.1 Practical and factual responses about the scheme

Seventy-two respondents (83%) answered that external SCONUL Access users can access all their libraries and main collections (Question 3). Where libraries do not allow access to everything, they exclude their short loan collections, their electronic collections, and their audio-visual material. Four institutions also explained that only their “main” library can be accessed. These responses show that, overall, libraries are very accommodating of external users. Furthermore, excluding external users from using the short loan collection is unlikely to reduce the range of materials that a user has access to, given that most, if not all, material held in short loan collections will be high-use core text material, which will be stocked at many libraries.

Over half of the libraries (49 libraries, 56%) answered that their library is a member of another collaborative scheme. Of those that are members of other schemes 32 (62%) answered that they find SCONUL Access to be the most beneficial, and 15 (29%) find the schemes to be equally beneficial. Where they found another collaborative scheme to be more beneficial their preference was for a more local scheme. The type of the academic institution and the size of the institution does not appear to affect whether a library is part of other collaborative schemes (Tables 4.14 and 4.15).

Table 4.14: Affiliation to another collaborative scheme, according to type of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is your library a member of any other resource sharing, or similar, schemes (eg locally)?</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russell/1994</td>
<td>Not Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.54
Table 4.15: Affiliation to another collaborative scheme, according to size of university

| Is your library a member of any other resource sharing, or similar, schemes (eg locally)? | Total number of students |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Unknown | ≥20,000 | 10,000 - 19,000 | ≤9,000 | Total |
| Yes | 7 | 16 | 13 | 13 | 49 |
|  | 77.8% | 55.2% | 56.5% | 50.0% | 56.3% |
| No | 2 | 13 | 10 | 13 | 38 |
|  | 22.2% | 44.8% | 43.5% | 50.0% | 43.7% |
| Total | 9 | 29 | 23 | 26 | 87 |
|  | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.55

4.2.2 Opinions relating to the scheme

4.2.2.1 Most important aspects of the scheme

The survey showed that librarians and their respective libraries do not see provision of space for external users as the highest priority. 47 librarians (54% of respondents) answered that they see “increasing the amount of material that users have access to” as the most important aspect of the SCONUL Access scheme. 33 (38%) argue that increasing access to material and provision of study space are equally important. By contrast, only 7 (8%) see the primary function of SCONUL Access as providing a space in which to study. The type of institution does not appear to have much impact on how important librarians see the scheme being use, with 50-60% of respondents from each group answering that they see increasing the amount of material that users have access to as the most important feature of the scheme (Table 4.16). Similarly there was no significant difference based on the size of the institution or the proportion of postgraduates (Tables 4.17, 4.18).
### Table 4.1: Views about the SCONUL Access scheme, according to type of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1. Which do you view as the most important aspect of the SCONUL Access Scheme?</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russell/1994</td>
<td>Not Russell</td>
<td>Misc</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the amount of material that users have access to</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a study space for students when they are unable to use their home institution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of the above are equally important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.92

### Table 4.17: Views about the SCONUL Access scheme, according to size of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1. Which do you view as the most important aspect of the SCONUL Access Scheme?</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>≥20,000</td>
<td>10,000 - 19,000</td>
<td>≤9,000</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the amount of material that users have access to</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a study space for students when they are unable to use their home institution</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both of the above are equally important</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.78
Table 4.1: Views about the SCONUL Access scheme, according to according to universities’ proportion of postgraduate students

| Q1. Which do you view as the most important aspect of the SCONUL Access Scheme? | Postgraduate proportion |          |
|---|-----------------|------------------|---|
| | Unknown | Below Average | Average | Above Average | Total |
| Increasing the amount of material that users have access to | 6 | 6 | 26 | 9 | 47 |
| | 66.7% | 42.9% | 51.0% | 69.2% | 54.0% |
| Providing a study space for students when they are unable to use their home institution | 1 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 7 |
| | 11.1% | .0% | 9.8% | 7.7% | 8.0% |
| Both of the above are equally important | 2 | 8 | 20 | 3 | 33 |
| | 22.2% | 57.1% | 39.2% | 23.1% | 37.9% |
| Total | 9 | 14 | 51 | 13 | 87 |
| | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.50

4.2.2.2 Home and external users

Most libraries find that the advantages of the SCONUL Access scheme outweigh the costs, with 65 (75%) of respondents answering that the pressures placed on the library by the scheme are minimal, and that the benefits outweigh the cost. Only 10 (12%) libraries reported that helping external users was time consuming, although 17 (20%) respondents admitted that the amount of space that external users take up was an issue, and 21 (24%) of respondents answered that registering and explaining the scheme to home students is time consuming. For this question participants were able to tick multiple responses.

A large majority of the respondents see their home users as benefiting from the scheme at least as much as external users. Thirty-six librarians (41%) see their users as benefiting more from the scheme than do external users who use their library; 47 respondents (54%) see home users and external users of the scheme as benefitting equally (Table 4.19). When responses are examined according to types of institution, 80% of the Russell/1994 Group respondents (16/20 librarians) see the scheme as benefiting both groups in equal measure, whereas the respondents from the non-Russell/1994 Group were split between seeing their own users as benefiting more from the scheme and both groups benefiting in equal measure (Table 18).
Table 4.19: Opinion about external versus home users, according to type of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4. Do you feel that external users benefit more or less from the SCONUL Access scheme than your own users?</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russell/1994</td>
<td>Not Russell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External users benefit more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home users benefit more</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both benefit in equal measure</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.007

4.2.2.3 User groups (Bands A to C)

The majority of libraries view the scheme as most beneficial to Band B users (distance and placement students), with 58 respondents (72%) viewing this user group as benefiting the most. Band A (academic staff) were seen as the second most important user group, followed by Band C (postgraduate students). Reference Only (undergraduate students) were seen to benefit from the scheme least, with only 4 respondents viewing this group as benefiting the most from the scheme. One way of analysing and presenting these preferences so that all choices, not just first choices, are included in the analysis is to mark the bands on a scoring system in which ranking first receives 4 points, and so on down to 1 point for being listed as the least important. Table 4.20 shows this scoring: Band B, for example, was ranked first on 58 occasions, second on 12 occasions and so on; application of the points system produces the total score shown. Plainly, Band B (distance and placement students) are shown by the total score to be the ones thought to benefit most (Figures 4.3 and 4.4).
Table 4.20: Analysis of a ranking procedure to determine opinions about which categories of library users benefit most from the SCONUL Access scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band A (Academic staff)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band B (Distance and placement students)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band C (Postgraduate students)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Only</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3: Points score from a ranking procedure to determine opinions about which categories of library users benefit most from the SCONUL Access scheme
Across the different types of institution there was consensus, with more than 50% of respondents from each type of institution answering that they view part time and distance learners as benefiting the most from the scheme. This is an interesting result, and not completely in keeping with what SCONUL argues is the scheme’s primary purpose.

Table 4.21: Perceived benefit from the SCONUL Access scheme: ranking Band B in first place, according to type of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent placed Band B in first place when ranking categories of users who benefit from the scheme</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th>Russell or 1994 Group</th>
<th>Not Russell or 1994</th>
<th>Misc</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ranked Band B 1st</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranked Band B 2nd</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranked Band B 3rd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranked Band B 4th</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.39
4.2.2.4 Scheme’s implementation to its potential

The survey demonstrated a lack of agreement between librarians as to whether the scheme is used to its potential. 6% of respondents strongly agree with the statement that the SCONUL Access scheme is used to its full potential, with a total of 45% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing. 36% of librarians neither agreed nor disagreed. This left 19% of respondents answering that they disagree with the statement. No-one answered that they strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 4.5).

Figure 5: Librarians views on the potential of the scheme

Q6. The SCONUL Access scheme is used to its full potential

When views about the scheme’s potential were examined according to types of university, proportions of postgraduate students, and size of universities, no clear differences were found. Across the sector, there is a view consistent with the pie chart shown in Figure 5: that many agree and few disagree with the proposition that the SCONUL Access scheme is being used to its potential.

Twenty respondents answered that they see the scheme as not being used to its full potential as a consequence of it being insufficiently publicised. “I believe more would use it [the scheme] if they knew of its existence” (Institution 128). “We could probably market this better to our users and I’m guessing that others could do the same” (115). However, there was some inconsistency with a few respondents, where they see the scheme as used to its full potential, arguing that they regard the scheme as well publicised: “It is well organised and well publicised and provides a valuable service” (102).
Three respondents commented that academic libraries might not publicise the SCONUL Access scheme as much as they could, or would like to, because they fear that doing so would place a strain on the scheme by having too many users:

“To expand the scheme further may put more strain on certain institutions who may then decide to leave” (133).

“It could be more pro-actively promoted to library users - I think that fears of over-use have prevented this” (18).

“There is a tendency to not go all out in promoting the scheme to all students, in case others complain that we send too many students to them.” (47).

Lots of respondents answered that they see the provision of access to electronic resources as one reason why the scheme is not used to its potential. “I believe users could benefit more by having access to e-learning resources as well as IT access” (49). This opinion is coupled with some librarians admitting that their library could improve its ICT provision to external users: “At my library, I think we need to do more to give users access to electronic resources” (105).

The comments of respondents showed that there is some agreement that librarians would like to see an improvement to the process of registering new users onto the scheme. Comments included suggestions that the registration process be available for completion online, that the banding be simplified, and that the website be improved: “Too cumbersome administration at the moment” (47); “Getting users to understand the different bands is difficult” (165). The process can be complicated not only for users but for library staff: “Administratively, it’s quite onerous, and must be labour intensive in larger institutions” (51).
4.2.2.5 Views on collaboration

Almost all librarians see collaboration as being at least as important today as it was five years ago: 75 respondents (86%) answered that they see library collaboration as a lot more or slightly more important than it was five years ago. 11 librarians (13%) believe that collaboration is equally important now as it was five years ago. Only one respondent, No 137, answered that they see library collaboration as less important; their comment later on in the questionnaire was that “[the scheme places] too many restraints on our resources and study spaces to provide them for students from other institutions.” Not surprisingly, given the general agreement across the libraries, there is little difference in opinion to be found between universities, whether categorised by their Group affiliation, size or proportion of postgraduate students.

The respondents’ open-ended comments suggest that libraries see collaboration as a means of dealing with diminishing budgets, adverse currency exchange rates, increasing cost of resources, and pressures on space:

“Budget constraint has seen book and periodical collections shrink. Collaboration goes a little way towards redressing losses” (133).

“Current financial pressures render collaboration essential. Coupled with that, increased student numbers and greater customer expectations likely to result from the increase in fees, mean that these kinds of arrangements will be ever more necessary” (58).

Comments also allude to the need for libraries not simply to allow users to move between institutions but to share the actual materials: “There will be increasing pressure on funding. Collaborative purchasing as well as study access will be important” (63). Respondents are in agreement that students’ expectations have increased in recent years, and are likely to continue to rise as the cost of tuition fees grows. The increasing pressures on academics to publish more research means that they too place more demands on the library: “Student and staff expectations of library services are higher whilst budgets for collections are smaller” (147).

Some respondents stressed how institutional and wider politics place expectations on libraries. They must be seen to be doing the best that they can to maximise their spending power and the use made of their resources and services. Libraries can do this by co-operating with one another, the ensuing collaboration helping libraries to justify their budgets and their very existence:

“Pressure from Government to improve collaboration, links to funding etc. Libraries need to justify non accessible policies now” (101);
“need to justify our existence more - so should be trying to give users access to as many resources as we can including ones not held at our institution” (21); and

“it would be easy to dismiss co-operation in competitive times but we are still a force to be reckoned with. Co-operation schemes underline this” (78).

4.2.2.6 Views on the future of the scheme

Almost all of the respondents view the SCONUL Access scheme as having a future (Table 24). Four respondents answered that they were unsure either because they didn’t feel that they were “qualified to comment”, or because they did not feel that their institution was involved in the scheme enough for them to give an informed answer. One participant (26) answered that they “would like to see all state funded university and college libraries being freely available to students.” Thirty-nine respondents (45%) see the scheme as continuing in its current form, and 44 (51%) answered that they see the scheme continuing in an evolved form. Many of the non-Russell/1994 Group respondents (23 respondents, 58%) believe that improvements can be made to the future scheme, whilst slightly fewer of the Russell/1994 Group respondents (10, 50%), and substantially fewer of the miscellaneous universities reported the need for change; these differences were not statistically significant (Table 24).

Table 4.22: Opinion about the future of the scheme, according to type of university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q9. Do you see the SCONUL Access scheme as having a future?</th>
<th>Type of university</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russell or 1994 Group</td>
<td>Not Russell or 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in its current form</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but in an evolved version</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.28
When discussing the scheme’s future, the themes that emerged were similar to the ones derived earlier when dealing with whether the respondents thought that the scheme is used to its potential. Respondents commented again that they would like to see an improvement to electronic resource provision, that the scheme needs to be better publicised, and that they would like to see an improvement in the scheme’s administration. There were some more specific comments such as hopes that the legal deposit libraries of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Trinity College Dublin become involved in the scheme; that libraries offer postal loans; and a suggestion that the scheme be extended to Europe. One institution commented that libraries need to “take on board the need to welcome external members rather than see them as an additional drain on resources” (101).

There was general agreement that the scheme will continue to be of importance, with many respondents commenting on the growing demands from the ever increasing number of part-time and distance learners. There was a mixture of comments regarding the expansion of the scheme to incorporate undergraduates, with some librarians suggesting that the SCONUL Access reference card be removed so that these students would simply need their valid university card to gain access, or that students would be automatically registered onto the scheme as part of their home library membership: “I would like to see all state funded university and college libraries being freely available to all students” (26). By contrast, other respondents said that undergraduates should be limited to vacation times only, as is already the case at some institutions. One respondent expressed the fear that reductions in funding will lead to libraries withdrawing into themselves, feeling that they must “close their doors to competitors” (47). Another respondent believed that an informal forum of some sort would be of great benefit to libraries; it would allow for the scheme’s procedures and for concerns and good practice to be shared (97). Respondent 139 envisaged the scheme becoming more user led, and the librarian from institution 37 suggested that social media be used to promote the scheme to potential users and to help put across the important messages surrounding the scheme.
### 4.2.2.7 Views on the future of the scheme, according to views about the scheme’s potential

When comparing the attitudes of librarians towards the future of the SCONUL Access scheme with the answers given for the question asking whether the scheme is used to its potential, it can be seen (Table 4.23) that 21 of the 39 (54%) respondents who see the scheme as being used to its full potential, regard it as having a future in its current form. On the other hand, 88% of the respondents who said that they didn’t think the scheme is used to its full potential answered that they thought the scheme needed to evolve (Chi-Square test, $P=0.016$).

Table 4.23: Opinion about the future of the scheme, according to opinions about its potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you see the SCONUL Access scheme as having a future?</th>
<th>Scheme is used to its full potential</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree or Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, in its current form</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but in an evolved version</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: $P=0.016$

### 4.2.2.8 Unstructured comments about the scheme

In the section of the survey that asked for further comments on the scheme, a large majority of respondents (67 in total) were keen to state that they value the scheme greatly: “the scheme is vital, any improvements can only add value to an already valuable service” (24), “It adds value to our library services” (36), “scheme is valuable and at very little inconvenience” (64). The recurring comments here were that the scheme is a great advance on its predecessors, but that the registration process could be more streamlined and made available online. There were also suggestions that a scheme such as this should be reviewed regularly in order to remain relevant: “we do value the scheme, [but] it might be a good time to review the scheme” (58).
A further comment that was brought up by 21 of the respondents was the issue of electronic access provision. One respondent commented that Eduroam can be unreliable and that users sometimes struggle to connect to the network. Other respondents mentioned the need to work out licensing agreements with publishers so that better access to materials can be provided to external users. However, it is unclear as to whether these comments refer to improving the existing walk-in access provision and to Eduroam, or whether the respondents are saying that these facilities have not been implemented sufficiently by libraries. Two of the respondents commented that with libraries removing their back copies from of journals from the shelves adds further to the need for libraries to improve electronic provision to external users.

4.2.3 Combining data from the survey and the appraisal of the website

Seventeen of the questionnaire respondents (20%) work at libraries that do not provide any information about SCONUL Access to their own library users (Table 4.24). This observation may partly explain the striking finding that, of the 75 librarians who view collaboration as more important today than five years ago, 30 (40%) of them work in libraries that make finding information about the scheme impossible or difficult for their home users to find (Table 4.24). Similarly 23 (31%) of these same people, who value the growing importance of collaboration, work in libraries that provide for their external users either no information on the SCONUL scheme or they make the information about it hard to find (Table 4.25).

Table 4.24: Ease of finding information about the scheme on the university’s website (home users), according to opinion about collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: home users</th>
<th>Library collaboration compared with 5 years ago</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lot or slightly more important</td>
<td>Equally important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information hard to find</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information easy or straightforward to find</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.57
Table 4.25: Ease of finding information about the scheme on the university’s website (external users), according to opinion about collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: external users</th>
<th>Library collaboration compared with 5 years ago</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A lot or slightly more important</td>
<td>Equally important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information hard to find</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information easy or straightforward to find</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.82

Of the 17 libraries that provided no information to home users about the SCONUL Access scheme, 47% (8/17) answered that they agreed or strongly agreed that the scheme is used to its full potential, and 35% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement (Table 4.26). This seems to suggest that the respondent may be unaware of the shortcomings in their library’s potential to promote the scheme more effectively to their users. However, it is important to note that those that completed the questionnaire may not actually be the same people that dictate website policy. In these same institutions (Table 4.26) 18% (3/17) of respondents believe that the scheme is not used to its full potential; whether or not these participants are aware of the lack of visibility on their website is unclear.
Table 4.26: Ease of finding information about the scheme on the university’s website (home users), according to opinion about whether the scheme is being used to its potential

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult information is to find: home users</th>
<th>Scheme is used to its full potential</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Agree or Agree</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No information</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information hard to find</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information easy or straightforward to find</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson Chi Square Test: P=0.73
5 Discussion

5.1 Promotion and representation of the scheme

One striking finding from the analysis of the survey was that only 45% of respondents thought that the SCONUL Access scheme was being used to its full potential. This unpromising viewpoint was shared equally among institutions that are large and small, research-intensive and not. The qualitative responses from the questionnaire suggest that too few libraries promote the SCONUL Access scheme adequately. With a fifth of academic libraries providing no information for potential external users, and even fewer libraries providing information for their own users relating to the scheme, these libraries are not making the most of the scheme. Twenty librarians voluntarily commented (without a prompt in the questions asked) that they see the scheme as not being used to its potential because it is not properly promoted. Some of these respondents also commented that sometimes the scheme is promoted to a certain extent, but that students often fail to understand the scheme or to pay enough attention to library advertising more generally. The navigational pathway that users have to follow to find information relating to the scheme on the library website is too often complex and unclear, with words that will only make sense to the user who already knows what he or she is looking for. Libraries are perhaps too self-effacing, not doing enough to promote the services that they offer.

The website analysis demonstrates that libraries can be inclined to forget that their knowledge is not the same as that of their users; they are inclined to use library specific terminology and mention complex procedures. Furthermore, the differences between the bands of access, and the different restrictions existing at different universities and at different times of the year, may put users off using the scheme. As a result, librarians are required to provide their users with more assistance in completing the form because they need the bands explaining to them, which may put the libraries off publicising the scheme further. As well as making registration simpler it would be good to make the whole scheme less complex. In terms of complicated language, it could be argued that the name of the scheme is in itself confusing. Although the scheme is a project run and organised by SCONUL, library users are unlikely to know what SCONUL is. Libraries would do well to take account of this weakness in terminology and language, and encourage use of the scheme by employing English that everyone will understand.
5.2 Provision of electronic resources

The questionnaire findings demonstrate that many academic libraries would like to see better electronic resource provision for external users. Provision of access to electronic resources is split into two strands: Eduroam and walk-in access. Several of the questionnaire respondents commented on the unreliability of the Eduroam network, with users struggling to gain a good Wi-Fi signal. Walk-in access for external users so that they are able to use a computer to access a library’s electronic resources when they visit another library is a different issue. Through reviewing the library websites a noticeable absence on the pages was the mention of Eduroam. All libraries are subscribers to this scheme yet few mention, let alone publicise, this excellent resource. The reason for this failing is unclear. However, one argument could be that this ties in with the aforementioned fear that libraries have of too many external users taking up valuable space in the library. Another argument is that some librarians are unaware that Eduroam exists, or that all universities in the UK are subscribed to this scheme. Respondent number 30 commented that they feel that “Eduroam registration should be made more prominent and work in parallel with SCONUL”. This links to the mention in the literature on library collaboration that collaborative projects are growing to include groups of consortia, and collaborators that are not just libraries.

Comments from the questionnaire show that there is concern that the reduction in print journal holdings – both as a result of libraries removing their back files, as well as no longer subscribing to the print version of journals – makes widening access to resources for external users difficult because they cannot access the electronic resources. However, according to the SCONUL Access website, all SCONUL Access card holders qualify for use of walk-in access to library computers. Users should, therefore, be able to gain access to those electronic resources that have licences that permit such use. A criticism of this system is that it is not user friendly, with the available materials being difficult to locate. However, although these resources may be difficult to browse, if users know what resources they wish to access before arriving at another library then they should be able to gain access to as much as the publishers’ licences will permit. The comments made in the questionnaire suggest that many libraries or librarians are not aware that they should be able to provide external users with this walk-in facility; investigating whether this is actually the case would be useful. The questionnaire brought out another suggestion: that of offering external users a document delivery service, whereby users would be able to place specific requests for a printed copy of a specific journal article or book extract that they require. Although this could be difficult to administrate, and perhaps more time consuming, should the licences permit such a policy this could be a good way around the difficulty of managing the walk-in scheme.
5.3 Administering the scheme

There is some disagreement as to whether or not the scheme is straightforward for libraries to administer, with three librarians specifically commenting that they regard the scheme as well run and easy to administer. By contrast other librarians remarked that the registration scheme needs improving, and that the banding classifications need to be simplified. The responses demonstrate that there is some confusion over the difference between full time undergraduate students being granted reference-only access and the SCONUL Vacation scheme. However, the results clearly demonstrate that the banding scheme helps libraries to target those users that they see as needing the scheme the most. For example, Band B users (part time and distance learners) are viewed as benefiting most from the scheme by most libraries. This is a demonstration of the scheme working well across the library community. This finding supports the argument in the literature that the changing profile of users is having an important impact on libraries. Similarly, there is also a general agreement between libraries that the Reference Only users (full-time undergraduate students) benefit the least from the scheme.

5.4 Expectations placed on libraries

The demands placed on universities and consequently on their libraries are changing. There is an increasing feeling that where public money is spent the public should be able to benefit as a result. The comments in the questionnaire support the notion that librarians feel that this perspective applies to academic libraries as well. As O’Connell (1999) says, academic libraries now need to justify themselves if they do not allow external users to use their libraries, especially where they are students at other institutions. Collaborative schemes that widen user access therefore provide libraries with a good way to make themselves look good. Collaboration can help libraries to justify themselves to their direct and indirect funders, their home institution, and to the government.

There is agreement in the survey findings that student expectations of what their academic library can provide are increasing. This finding supports the argument in the literature that libraries have also changed the way that they view themselves and their users. It is clear from some of the questionnaire comments that libraries see themselves as playing an important part in enhancing the student experience. The results show that libraries are aware of student expectations having increased as a result of increased tuition fees, and that as fees in the UK are set to rise further libraries expect students to demand more from their library. Universities are preparing for the
expectation that future students will demand an “added value” service, and libraries will be expected to play a part in this development. By providing users with access to more resources than just those of their home institution, institution 42 argues that, as well as users being able to access more than they could otherwise, libraries also look like they really care about their users. However, whilst there is consensus that users will expect more from their library, another argument (mentioned by institution 58) has come out of the survey responses: students will expect more provision for themselves so libraries, fearing that they must dedicate more of their time to their own students, may become less willing to accommodate external users. Where physical space is particularly tight, libraries may decide that their home users will be less tolerant if external users are occupying limited space. Libraries could respond by becoming more insular; as budgets tighten further, libraries might feel increasingly that they have enough to do without having to cater for external users as well as their own. These findings support the literature, which argues that these attitudes have begun to influence libraries and look set to become more prominent and influential.

5.5 Funding and the need for collaboration

There was a resounding agreement among libraries that the current financial climate has raised the profile of collaboration between them; this is a view which supports the literature. Nearly every respondent indicated that collaboration is either more important today than it was five years ago or at least as important; many respondents commented in addition that libraries will not be able to cope without collaborating with other libraries. Libraries need to share their resources more now than in the past. As institution number 133 says, collaboration is a way for libraries to reduce the effect of diminishing stock: “budget constraints have seen book and periodical collections shrink. Collaboration goes a little way towards redressing losses.” Whilst most respondents, regardless of the size or grouping of their institution, see collaboration as more important now than in the past it could be concluded that the change is particularly apparent for that of the Russell and 1994 Group universities, compared with the smaller and more specialist institutions, for whom this has always been important. Smaller libraries were never able to cope alone, but now the larger libraries must do the same. From the results it can therefore be concluded that the respondents believe that home users and external users are joint beneficiaries of the SCONUL scheme: it was the research-intensive Russell and 1994 Group respondents who were by far the most emphatic about the scheme’s benefit to visitors as well as home users. This finding supports the literature, where it is argued that the
ways in which, and the extent to which, libraries benefit from a scheme will be different for each library. However, regardless of this, if a collaborative venture is carefully structured with clear goals consortia can be very successful.

The results demonstrate that most libraries are in favour of the scheme, with the majority of respondents viewing the pressures placed by the scheme on the library as minimal compared with the benefits that the scheme affords, and seeing their users as benefiting at least as much from the scheme as external users. Furthermore the majority of respondents view the SCONUL Access scheme as continuing into the future. However, in spite of these positive responses, the qualitative responses from respondents suggest that too many libraries do not promote the scheme as much as they might because they are fearful of the scheme becoming over used. As institution number 47 answered, their institution does not “[go] all out in promoting the scheme to all students, in case others [other libraries] complain that we send too many users to them” (institution 133). The scheme “could be more pro-actively promoted to library users – I think that fears of over-use have prevented this” (Institution 18). Theoretically this should not be a problem, because the scheme is based upon the premise of reciprocal access. However, as the literature demonstrates, schemes cannot succeed without everyone feeling that they are benefiting from it. Libraries clearly feel that they are beneficiaries, but they are wary about stretching this further. In order for more people to benefit from the scheme this reticence needs to be overcome. However if, as Institution 133 says “to expand the scheme further may put more strain on certain institutions who may then decide to leave”, then expanding the scheme does indeed need to be approached with caution.

The fear of putting too much of a strain on other libraries was more as a response to the problems of seating that libraries face. Certainly the survey demonstrated clearly that most librarians, regardless of their institution’s size or peer group, see the main benefit for external users being that of widening access to resources. Librarians would rather have external users come and use their resources than take up their space. However, the extent to which libraries can judge this is difficult. The respondent from institution 97 suggested that the scheme might benefit from a forum in which libraries could discuss the scheme informally. This point links to O’Connell’s (1999) argument that a positive collaborative scheme involves continual discussion between interested parties.

The library respondents demonstrated that there was a fairly even split in opinion as to whether the SCONUL Access scheme should continue in its current form, or whether it should evolve in the future. Respondents commented that they see the scheme as an improvement on the scheme’s predecessors, with respondents commenting that the scheme has increased in popularity each year. Whilst many of the respondents do view the scheme as currently working well there is a strong
argument for saying that, as O’Connell (1999) argues, collaborative projects should always be reassessed in order that they stay relevant to their users and develop alongside wider changes. Although the findings demonstrate that there is a real difference of opinion as to whether the scheme is used to its potential, the librarians who do not see the scheme as being used to its full potential also view the scheme as in need of change; this is because they believe that the scheme has much more to offer, and perhaps this stems from their belief in collaboration more generally.
6 Conclusion

6.1 Summary of results

Overall it can be concluded that librarians are overwhelmingly in favour of the SCONUL Access scheme. Librarians view the scheme as highly beneficial to all that use it. There is much enthusiasm for the scheme to continue, although some librarians would like to see improvements to the administrative procedures, and a clarity of electronic access provision is needed. The scheme is not publicised as well as it could be. This is demonstrated by the absence of, or difficult to find, information relating to the scheme on too many of the library websites. Too often there is an assumption that potential users of the scheme will have a prior understanding of the scheme and of library terms. Some libraries could also improve their wording so as to make more of the benefits of the scheme to their home users, and to portray more of a welcoming attitude towards visitors.

However, whilst librarians are keen for the scheme to continue to exist, there are fears that there is a maximum capacity of users that the scheme can handle, before its success becomes its downfall. The scheme can be viewed as an important example of the benefits that can be achieved from collaborative ventures, but also one which is not without its potential problems if it is not managed carefully; SCONUL Access, like other collaborative schemes, needs to be reviewed from time-to-time.

The attitudes of academic librarians in the UK are in line with the arguments presented in the literature; collaboration is essential if libraries are to continue to be able to provide a good service for their users. In addition to this, libraries need to defend their budgets and are under pressures to be seen to be doing more than they were able to do in the past; these opinions can be seen in both the literature and in the questionnaire responses.

The results support the hypothesis that “collaboration between academic libraries in the UK is strongly upheld through the SCONUL Access scheme”. Whilst criticisms may be made of the way in which some institutions administer and promote the scheme, overall the librarians surveyed in this research were enthusiastic about both the scheme and collaboration more widely.
6.2 Critique of results

The benefit of using a case study is that a more detailed understanding of the SCONUL Access scheme was reached, than would have been possible in a broader study. However, in focusing on one scheme the results need to be treated with more caution when considering their wider implications. By asking the respondents about their views on the wider issue of collaboration the scope of the survey was widened. However, the librarians’ experiences of the strengths and weaknesses of SCONUL Access are more specific to this particular scheme.

A sample of 53% for the questionnaire is a positive response, however one cannot assume that this is completely representative of all libraries. Those librarians that chose to respond may have done so because they had a particular interest in the scheme or had a particular opinion that they wished to convey, and are therefore only a representative of libraries that are particularly in favour or against the scheme. Although a sample size of 87 is not small, when comparing the questionnaire responses and the types and sizes of university the subgroups are inevitably relatively small. Therefore, generalising from these results is difficult. Also, it must be acknowledged that for each institution only one librarian was speaking for the whole library. The respondent may not have any day-to-day involvement in the running of the scheme, or may not be part of the decision-making team.

Question 2 can be criticised for perhaps not measuring exactly what it was intended to. The grouping of “pressures on the library are minimal” together with “the benefits outweigh the negatives” may have caused participants to answer that they see both as being the case, when actually just one of these applies to them. For example, they may find that the scheme places considerable strain on the library, but still see the scheme as beneficial overall. A criticism of the findings from Question 4 is that although respondents knew that their responses would remain confidential, they still may not have been completely open about how they feel the scheme is used. In other words, many respondents may have felt that it would reflect badly on them or their library if they answered that they see external users as benefiting more from SCONUL Access than their own users.

In assessing the websites, while a standard method of analysis was used for each library, the method can be criticised as not completely reliable. Researcher bias cannot be completely avoided in a task such as this, where the names of institutions are known to the observer and may conjure up preconceived biases and expectations. Also, while the order of analysis was random, the order in which they were viewed may have had an unintentional impact, with the researcher gaining a better understanding of where to look on the website for the relevant information. Furthermore, the researcher has an understanding of SCONUL Access and of academic libraries more generally,
however a student or academic may perceive the information on the websites differently. In terms of using the websites as a reflection of librarian opinions the website analysis needs to be treated with some caution, because the person that maintains the library web pages may not be the person that administers the scheme. Also, basing assumptions of how a library operates the scheme based primarily on their website does not take into account issues of the library web pages being subject to institution’s website as a whole. For example, larger institutions may have a more structured and rigid website than a smaller institution. Poor website provision may be more of a reflection of the institution than the library itself.

6.3 Practical implications

With regards to the SCONUL Access scheme itself, there are four clear changes that could be made to improve the scheme:

The first change would be that of making the registration process easier for new users, possibly with the simplification of banding to make the Reference only banding the same as the SCONUL Vacation band. It would be beneficial to allow online registration and renewal for users.

The second development would be to improve the way in which information relating to the scheme is organised on the respective library websites. Certainly those libraries that do not provide any information about the scheme whether to their home users or to external visitors should put this deficit to rights. The libraries that do not already should also ensure that the wording and the pathway structure for each of the links is clear to users that may not be familiar with the scheme or with the website. In terms of explaining the scheme, although many libraries refer users to the SCONUL Access website, it would perhaps be beneficial for an agreed statement to be devised that explains the scheme in basic terms that each library could then use on their website. A few libraries have provided home users with an online guide to using other libraries, which explains the scheme in further informing users of the rules of the programme, and suggesting ways in which they can maximise their visit by suggesting search techniques and linking to COPAC.

The third suggestion is that the Eduroam and walk-in access schemes be reviewed. Although in theory all libraries should be able to offer these services to external users, there seems to be some confusion as to whether or not they are in fact doing so, or whether they are making external users
aware of these resources. It might be helpful for libraries to explain on their website which of these they offer, and provide users with suggestions that will help them to understand and prepare for their visit ahead of arrival.

The final point to make is that it might be beneficial for there to be more dialogue between the libraries or a group discussion to decide how libraries would like to see the scheme developing in the future. The issue that some libraries seem to be fearful of promoting the scheme too much for fear of overuse needs to be dealt with. If libraries really feel that the scheme should be more about access to resources than to space, particularly with regards to undergraduates, perhaps difficult decisions need to be taken on how their needs can be balanced with the capacity of the scheme.

Following on from this there is room for the scheme to be better publicised. Perhaps the name could be changed to something more memorable or easier for potential users to relate to. As O'Connor (1999) argues, collaborative schemes need to rework their image every once in a while, in order to stay relevance. The SCONUL Access scheme offers users far more than any single library can hope to provide alone; the scheme should be showcased as an example of good practice, and of what libraries can achieve when they work together. Finally, as collaboration becomes more global, expanding the scheme to work with Europe and other parts of the world might be a positive way in which to move the scheme forward.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

In order to better understand the effectiveness of the SCONUL Access scheme it would be interesting to survey students and staff at a range of different universities and colleges in order to establish first, whether they are aware of the scheme and understand how they may use it; and second, to establish what their experiences of the scheme have been if they have used it. A useful comparison would be to see how SCONUL Access compares with the cross-sector scheme Inspire, and also with some of the more local collaborative schemes.

Further research is needed to understand how member libraries behave in practice. For example, the results may tell a different story were a researcher to go into a sample of libraries as a SCONUL Access card holder.
Bibliography


Appendix 1: University groupings

**Russell Group**
The University of Birmingham
The University of Bristol
The University of Cambridge
Cardiff University
The University of Edinburgh
The University of Glasgow
Imperial College London
King's College London
The University of Leeds
The University of Liverpool
London School of Economics and Political Science
The University of Manchester
Newcastle University
The University of Nottingham
The University of Oxford
Queen's University Belfast
The University of Sheffield
The University of Southampton
University College London
The University of Warwick

**1994 Group**
University of Bath
Birkbeck, University of London
Durham University
University of East Anglia
University of Essex
University of Exeter
Goldsmiths, University of London
Institute of Education, University of London
Goldsmiths University of London
Lancaster University
University of Leicester
Loughborough University
Queen Mary, University of London
University of Reading
Royal Holloway, University of London,
University of St Andrews
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of Surrey
University of Sussex
University of York

**Million +**

University of Abertay Dundee
Anglia Ruskin University
Bath Spa University
University of Bedfordshire
Birmingham City University
University of Bolton
Buckinghamshire New University
Canterbury Christ Church University
University of Central Lancashire
Coventry University
University of Derby
University of East London
Edinburgh Napier University
University of Gloucestershire
University of Greenwich
Kingston University
Leeds Metropolitan University
London Metropolitan University
London South Bank University
Middlesex University
University of Northampton
Southampton Solent University
Staffordshire University
University of Sunderland
University of West London
University of the West of Scotland
University of Wolverhampton
University Alliance
Aberystwyth University
Bournemouth University
University of Bradford
De Montfort University
University of Glamorgan
Glasgow Caledonian University
University of Hertfordshire
University of Huddersfield
University of Lincoln
Liverpool John Moores University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Northumbria University
Nottingham Trent University
Open University
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
University of Portsmouth
University of Salford
Sheffield Hallam University
Teesside University
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
University of Wales, Newport
University of the West of England

Ukadia
Arts University College at Bournemouth
Central School of Speech and Drama
Cleveland College of Art & Design
Hereford College of Arts
Leeds College of Art
Norwich University College of the Arts
Plymouth College of Art
Ravensbourne
Rose Bruford College
Royal College of Art
University College Falmouth
University for the Creative Arts
University of the Arts London
Appendix 2: Website analysis

For each website the following information was gathered:

- Institution number
- Number of clicks from the library homepage to information about SCONUL (for home users)
- Ease of finding relevant material: for home users (easy, straightforward, difficult, non-existent)
- Clarity of wording clear for home user (easy, acceptable, poor)
- Explanation of purpose of SCONUL Access to home user (extensive, basic, non-existent)
- Explanation of how to register, for home user (extensive, basic, non-existent)
- Number of clicks from the library homepage to information about SCONUL (for external users)
- Ease of finding relevant material: for external users (easy, straightforward, difficult, non-existent)
- Friendly wording for external users (friendly, acceptable, off-putting)
Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Thank you for considering my request to fill out this questionnaire. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. All answers will remain confidential, and data analysis will be grouped, in order that participants' individual responses cannot be identified. Please tick here to clarify here that you have read the above, and are happy to participate in this study. Thank you.

( ) I give my informed consent to participating in this study
( ) I do not give my consent

At which institution do you work? Your answers will be kept confidential, and all data will be collated so that individual institutions are not identifiable.

____________________________________________

1) Which do you view as the most important aspect of the SCONUL Access Scheme?

( ) Increasing the amount of material that users have access to
( ) Providing a study space for students when they are unable to use their home institution
( ) Both of the above are equally important

2) How does the SCONUL Access scheme affect your library? (Please tick all that apply)

[ ] It can be time consuming when external users require help
[ ] It decreases the amount of space left for our own students
[ ] Registering our home users with SCONUL Access cards and explaining how the scheme works is time consuming
[ ] Pressures placed on the library are minimal, and the benefits outweigh the negatives

3) Do you allow external SCONUL users to access all your libraries and main collections?

( ) Yes
( ) No. Please give details
4) Do you feel that external users benefit more or less from the SCONUL Access scheme than your own users?

( ) External users benefit more
( ) Home users benefit more
( ) Both benefit in equal measure

5) For which category of user do you think the SCONUL Access scheme is most beneficial? Please rank the bands in order of importance, starting with the most important.

_______ Band A (Staff and research students)
_______ Band B (Part-time, distance, and placement students)
_______ Band C (Taught postgraduates)
_______ Reference only users

Please comment on why you believe this to be the case

6) The SCONUL Access scheme is used to its full potential

( ) Strongly agree
( ) Agree
( ) Neither agree nor disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Strongly disagree

Please comment on why you think this is the case
7) Is your library a member of any other resource sharing, or similar, schemes? (eg. locally)

( ) Yes. Please specify

( ) No

If yes, which scheme do you find more beneficial?

( ) SCONUL Access

( ) Our other scheme(s). Please comment

( ) Both are of equal value

8) Do you see library collaboration as more or less important today than five years ago?

( ) A lot more important

( ) Slightly more important

( ) The same as 5 years ago

( ) Slightly less important

( ) A lot less important

Why do you think this is?

9) Do you see the SCONUL Access scheme as having a future?

( ) Yes, in its current form

( ) Yes, but in an evolved version

( ) No

( ) Not sure

Please comment on how you see SCONUL Access developing in the future.
10) If you have any thoughts or comments on the scheme please write them here. Do you value the scheme? In what ways do you think the scheme could be developed or improved further?

If you have any comments about this survey or research, please write them here.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
Appendix 4: Email 1

from ______

to________

date Tue, Jul 26, 2011 at 10:06 PM

subject SCONUL Access

mailed-by gmail.com

Dear Mr/Ms______,

I am emailing you as the listed SCONUL Access contact for your institution. If you are no longer the SCONUL contact, I would be very grateful if you could forward this email to the relevant member of staff. I am currently investigating the ways in which academic libraries promote and practice collaborative policies, with a particular focus on the SCONUL Access and Vacation schemes. I am contacting you to ask whether you would be willing to participate in my research.

Participation will involve completing a short questionnaire about your library’s policies on SCONUL Access, and your opinions about the scheme. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. All answers will remain confidential, and data analysis will be grouped, in order that participants’ individual responses cannot be identified.

If you would like to participate in this research, please go to this address to complete the questionnaire: http://edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/588823/SCONUL-Access-and-Academic-Library-Collaboration

This research has been ethically approved by the University of Sheffield, and is being supervised by Sheila Corrall. If you have any questions regarding the research method or results please contact me at _____ or Sheila Corrall at ______.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

________
Appendix 5: Email 2

from __________
to __________

date Tue, Aug 2, 2011 at 4:04 PM
subject SCONUL Access
mailed-by gmail.com

Hello,

You may remember receiving an email from me asking for people to participate in my survey into the SCONUL Access scheme. I realise that I am asking at a busy time of the year, however if you do have time to fill in the questionnaire I would be very grateful. There are only 10 questions, and I am keen to gain input from as many academic libraries as I can. I will be closing the survey at the end of the week. Further details relating to the study are given bellow.

If you would like to participate in this research, please go to this address to complete the questionnaire: http://edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/588823/SCONUL-Access-and-Academic-Library-Collaboration

Thank you again for your consideration of my request.

__________

I am currently investigating the ways in which academic libraries promote and practice collaborative policies, with a particular focus on the SCONUL Access and Vacation schemes. I am contacting you to ask whether you would be willing to participate in my research.

Participation will involve completing a short questionnaire about your library’s policies on SCONUL Access, and your opinions about the scheme. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. All answers will remain confidential, and data analysis will be grouped, in order that participants’ individual responses cannot be identified.

This research has been ethically approved by the University of Sheffield, and is being supervised by Sheila Corrall. If you have any questions regarding the research method or results please contact me at __________, or Sheila Corrall at __________.