Measuring our success: ensuring Imperial College medical library is delivering a quality service to its users

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The success of all service organisations depends on the extent to which they continually assess and meet their clients' needs and thus their commitment to the principles and processes of quality improvement. Part of the quality improvement process in libraries is the development of standards that can be used to assess and support library and information services in providing cost-effective, client-centred services.

Background and context

Imperial College London is an independent constituent part of the University of London and was established in 1907. Its mission 'embodies and delivers world class scholarship, education and research in science, engineering and medicine, with particular regard to their application in industry, commerce and healthcare'. [1]

Imperial College Library is one of the major academic research libraries in the United Kingdom, with outstanding collections in science, engineering and medicine. Mergers with a number of medical schools in West London during the past five years have further strengthened the collections. However, the merged Library had grown in a largely unplanned way, with new libraries simply being bolted on. As a result the current service had an accretion of different cultures and needed to develop a sense of homogeneity and a common purpose.

Impetus for change

Changes, both external and internal, provided the impetus for the library to review its current position, and to consider the major strategic issues it faced. Since 1992 the library environment has been transformed by unprecedented developments in information technology, which have had a major impact both on the format of the information resources themselves and on the way these resources are accessed. Changes within the College, to both its academic structure and top-level management, created an opportunity to assess the Library's current structure and implement modifications, so that the service is better able to respond quickly and flexibly to changing circumstances. The structure is now appropriate to

support the Library's strategic aims and make full use of staff knowledge and expertise at all levels.

Challenge for the future

The challenge for Imperial College Library now is to continue to play a leading role in embracing these changes, seeking further opportunities to develop innovative, world-class services and collections that are relevant to the College's evolving needs. To meet this challenge the Library needs rigorous, imaginative management and a flexible and highly skilled staff, working within the context of a clear strategic vision that is shared and understood by all members of the Library, and has been endorsed by the College community.

Strategic directions

A first step was for the library to agree its mission statement:

> Imperial College, as a leading institution for research, teaching and education in science, engineering, medicine and management, needs a world-class information service to support it. The Library will meet this need by connecting people to the best information and knowledge available, in the form and at the time of most benefit to the user.

The Library Strategic Plan for 2002-5 [2] states, as one of its visions, to

- respond positively and flexibly to changing user needs.

It was thus necessary to introduce a range of monitoring activities to ensure the library is meeting the needs of its users.

Organisational change

Imperial College Library consists of a Central library, department and campus libraries. The Central and department libraries are located on the main campus at South Kensington in West London. There are seven campus libraries, five medical located across West London, and two life sciences located in Berkshire and Kent.

Library mergers

Prior to 1995 medicine at Imperial consisted of St.Mary's medical school.

2

As part of a major restructuring of medicine in London, the independent medical schools aligned themselves to one of the four Colleges of the University of London. The National Heart & Lung Institute merged with Imperial College in 1995, followed by Charing Cross & Westminster Medical School and the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in 1997. These schools with their associated research departments formed the Faculty of Medicine.

Restructuring

One of the key activities for the new Director of Library Services appointed in 2000 was to review the current library staffing structure which resulted in the establishment of a team-based organisation which also reflected the new academic structure of the College. Three directorates were created – Faculty Support Services; E-strategy and Information Resources; and Administration and Planning. Faculty Support reflects the College's Faculty structure – Business & Humanities, Engineering, Life Sciences, Medicine and Physical Sciences. Faculty Support Services for Medicine (FSSM) comprises the five medical campus libraries and a small team based in the Central Library on the main campus. The FSSM is lead by a Team Leader, with each campus library led by a Campus Library Manager (CLM) supported by a team of professional and support staff. In addition to being responsible for the management of the campus library each CLM has at least one service-wide responsibility and leads a cross-service team that make up the Library Support Groups. These are Collection Management, the NHS, Information Literacy, Public Services, and Public Communications. The library serves two distinct groups of users – staff and students of the College and the staff of eleven NHS Trusts.

Faculty Support Services is the front-line in delivering services to users and its key responsibilities include selection and exploitation of resources, skills training to enable effective use of these resources, and liaison with academics and students to enable effective communication and feedback.

Monitoring activities

A number of goals were identified in the Strategic Directions:
- providing support for College and external research audits and quality assessments (1.1.7)
- providing support for College and external teaching and learning audits, quality assessments and accreditations (1.2.6)
- to develop flexible collection development and management policies to ensure that the resources provided are tailored to users' changing needs (2.3)
- to make regular review of collections and seek cost-effective

solutions to the storage of lesser-used material (2.10)

- to regularly audit space requirements to ensure that we are making optimal use of space (3.3.)

- to revise the organisation of library services to ensure that they are flexible, efficient, effective and user-focused. Regular review of procedures, systems, roles and responsibilities will ensure that we continue to meet users' needs in a rapidly changing environment (4.6)

- to further develop our feedback and quality assurance processes in accordance with specifications set by the College, HEFCE, SCONUL and other external agencies, in order to assist the Library's programme of continuous improvements (4.7)

The Library is currently implementing a range of activities that will provide feedback on users needs and which will monitor the quality of provided services and use nationally recognised criteria for measuring service provision, some of which are specific to medicine.

Service Level Definitions and Key Performance Indicators

In 2003 the library developed a series of Service Level Definitions [3], the purpose of which is to:

- describe the services which the library provides to the faculties, business school and humanities programme

- set standards for the service

- explain how these will be monitored

- state the responsibilities of users of the service and what they need to do to assist the library in providing an effective and efficient service

The Service Level Definitions are reviewed annually and updated as required. Information about the Library's achievement of key targets is reported in the library annual report [4].

The final section of the document details some of the methods to be used in monitoring customer satisfaction and responding to feedback.

Key Performance Indicators

To measure the responsiveness of the services described in the SLD, a

range of Key Performance Indicators have been developed, the monitoring of which is done by the appropriate Team. For example, the Administration Unit is responsible for initiating the customer satisfaction surveys in conjunction with other appropriate library staff. Measures include how long an Interlibrary Loan will take, or feedback that a recommended book has been purchased.

College Library Committees

Library staff are represented on a number of College Library committees. The main College Library Committee advises on general library policy and the co-ordination of library facilities within the College with department and campus user groups concentrating on local issues and activities. Faculty Teams will provide advice and feedback on issues of concern about library services to the Faculties and Departments. Library staff attend staff/student committees, Faculty teaching and research committees, and in medicine a number of NHS Trust committees such as Learning & Teaching and Postgraduate Medical Education.

Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Included in the SLD is a commitment to regularly consult our users and the traditional method has been an annual survey, conducted during the summer term. Repeating the same survey for a number of years provides good comparative data where the stock and services are shown to meet the majority of users' needs. The opportunity for users to provide other comments has highlighted a number of areas where more specific feedback is required.

In future full surveys will be done every two years and surveys about specific aspects of the library service will be conducted from time to time. In May 2005 the survey concentrated on library opening hours. During Easter and summer term 2004 and again in 2005 the Central Library has been open 24/7. There have been requests to extend opening hours for other libraries, one specifically being the medical library on the Charing Cross campus and it was felt that we needed more information about at which libraries and when extended library opening is required.

Focus groups

An initiative led by the Faculty of Medicine has been to look at library space and infrastructure. A Working Group has been informed by the results of a series of focus groups run by the library at the various medical campuses with representation from all the user groups – research staff,

students and the NHS. One of the recommendations in the Group's report was that the library should undertake this method of gaining feedback with other Faculties.

Feedback

The Library has relied on individual feedback from users for many years. A form, both online and paper, is available for users to make comments whenever they wish. These are responded to by the most appropriate member of the library staff, and when collated give an indication of current concerns. The Director of Library services and Assistant Director Faculty Support meet termly with the officers of the Students Union, and a recent development is termly meetings with student representatives from all the departments.

Service Level agreements, specifically with the NHS

The medical schools at the campuses co-exist with teaching hospitals that are part of the National Health Service (NHS). In addition to the College staff and students, the campus libraries provide service to staff working in their respective hospitals and local communities. These include senior medical staff such as consultants, doctors in training, nursing staff, allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and radiographers, technicians, ancillary support staff, and hospital managers. Building on existing service level agreements in the old medical schools, the first service level agreement (SLA) was developed in 1999 and has been running in three-year cycles since. The current agreement 2004-2007 between the College and the Northwest London Workforce Development Confederation (WDC) outlines the services available and are based on those in the SLDs. It also describes the service monitoring and review mechanisms. Responsibility for this rests with the SLA Monitoring Group that consists of representatives from the WDC Education & Development Forum, Imperial College London Library, the WDC Knowledge & Library Services Manager and the WDC Director of Partnerships and Quality. The role of the Group is to review and evaluate the operation of the agreement, to monitor the agreement through a range of activities, to develop partnership and innovation, and to approve the mechanism for the negotiation of a new agreement. The Group meets annually at which the Team Leader Medicine presents a report of the previous twelve months activities and a business plan for the following year. The report covers operation of the service, achievements and areas for development, relevant feedback from any library survey and activity monitoring.

Annual Statistical Returns for the NHS

The NHS Service Level Agreement requires the Library to collect a range of data in order to monitor activity at the campus libraries. At present these are total and new reader registrations, book loans, interlibrary loans and intersite document delivery and loans and information skills training sessions delivered.

As well as being included in the annual report to the SLA Monitoring Group, the data is collected by the WDC Knowledge & Library Services Manager to incorporate in the WDC return to pan-London and national statistics on NHS library use.

Annual Statistical Returns for Higher Education

The College Library is required to maintain, collate and submit data to SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries). SCONUL was founded in 1950 to promote excellence in library services in higher education and national libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland. All universities and many colleges of higher education are members.

As part of its collaboration remit SCONUL collects and publishes statistics collected from its members, enabling benchmarking and other comparative analysis.

Data collected includes the physical accommodation and provision for studying; provision of stock; clientele; use of libraries (circulation, interlibrary loans, photocopies); library staff and staff expenditure; expenditure on information provision and access; purchase of equipment, and income generation.

There are moves to establishing recognised standards and benchmarking through co-operation between higher education institutions in London. The M25 Quality Working Group is developing templates and guidelines on best practice and facilitating exchange of experience.

HeLicon Accreditation

HeLicon (Health Libraries Confederation) is the successor to the LINC Health Panel, a loose association of health care library organisations created to act as a single focus group. During 1999/2000 it undertook the development of a framework for the assessment of health library and information services. The first Checklist and Toolkit was used voluntarily by a number of NHS libraries. A second edition appeared in 2002 and has been adopted as the nationally recognised scheme for assessing the quality of health sector library and information services in the UK, including academic libraries. It is a generic document that focuses on the

components that every library and information service should have to support their clients in the health sector, particularly in evidence-based decision making and life-long learning. It identifies

- Strategic elements required for libraries to contribute effectively to the goals and objectives of their parent organisations.
- Fundamental processes required to establish and continually monitor the needs of library users.
- Essential resources required to enable libraries to supply adequate and effective information services.
- Criteria suitable for the measurement of the performance of professional health library services.
- Opportunities for change and future development within individual libraries and institutions.

The main criteria are

- 1. Library Philosophy and Management
- 2. Resources
- 3. Stock and Services

There are a series of 'must-haves' that are obligatory:

- 1.1 Strategy – the parent organisation has a formally approved library or knowledge strategy which is annually reviewed and includes a mission statement, aims and objectives, and which embraces the IT agenda

- 1.2 Access – There is access to library services for all staff and students working in the parent organisation and all those organisations with which a service agreement exists

- 1.3 Quality – The development of policy and strategy is informed by user consultation.

- 1.4 Organisation & Management – The library service has clear and effective organisational and management structures, which facilitate effective communication and which, are adequately documented. This includes branch libraries.

- 2.1 Finance - There is a separately identified library budget, which is annually reviewed, actively managed by the librarian and well documented.

- 2.2 Staff - An appropriately qualified librarian manages the service.

- 2.3 Information Technology- Library staff and users have equitable access to personal computers in the library that are designated in each case for their sole use.

- 2.4 Accommodation and Equipment - The library, its branches and its web presence are readily accessible for all potential users and

are well signposted.

- 3.1 Stock - Stock and electronic resources are selected and updated in consultation with users and are demonstrably up to date.

- 3.2 Services - Core users have access to the following services whether they are on-site or remote users:
  - Access to electronic resources
  - Document delivery services
  - Mediated searching services
  - Stock lending, reservation, renewal
  - Reference and enquiry services

- 3.3 Induction and User Education - The library service provides and promotes training to users in information handling skills.

In 2004 London Health Libraries, the pan-London association of all the NHS libraries and their academic partners, agreed to use the Checklist to assess their libraries services. In Northwest London a programme of visits has begun. In June 2005 the Royal Brompton campus library undertook a pilot accreditation visit in order to test the validity of the criteria to an academic institution. The reason being that some of the criteria are not directly relevant or appropriate to an HE institution.

Research and Teaching

Research and teaching are the fundamental activities of any higher education institution and the success of any HEI in attracting staff, students and funding depends on the quality of teaching and the output from research.

Research Assessment Exercise

Funding of research in UK universities is based on the outcome of Research Assessment Exercises (RAE) that assesses the quality of UK research and informs the selective distribution of public funds. The last exercise was conducted in 2001 and the next takes place during 2007-8. The results of the exercise will be expressed as quality profiles of research in each department submitting to the RAE. They will determine the annual distribution of more than £8 billion over a six-year period from 2009. The quality profiles measure the different proportions of work in a submission that reach each of four defined levels of quality. The process requires universities to submit the best work from each discipline to a panel of reviewers.

The Library's role in the RAE concentrates on the collection of publication information. Each researcher has to submit four publications published during a given period. The Library has developed a database using Reference Manager software and criteria for searching key databases to extract the bibliographic information. In addition to be used for the RAE, the information in the database can also be used to produce annual publications lists for annual reports, personal websites and other publications.

Quality Assessment (of teaching)

To ensure that appropriate standards in teaching are being achieved and a good quality education is being offered, UK universities are reviewed through an institutional audit. These ensure that institutions are providing higher education, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard.

This activity is provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies.

The process uses peer review where teams of academics conduct the audits and reviews. Some team members are drawn from industry and the professions. Academic review at subject level looks at subject areas against the broad aims of the subject provider. Judgements are made about the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for students.

Library provision plays an important role as a learning resource and has to provide evidence of support for learning. This could include the provision of core reading materials, information literacy training programmes, study facilities and other services required by students.

The QAA has also been contracted by the Department of Health to review healthcare education in the England. They are responsible for the Major Review of NHS-funded healthcare programmes in England and recognises the key importance of teaching and learning within a practice setting, as well as within higher education institutions. Imperial College does not provide healthcare courses. However, as the medical campus libraries provide library services to students on placement from other HEIs, they are included in the assessment through site visits. In future Helicon Accreditation will be the approved criteria for measuring library performance.

Postgraduate Medical Education and Training

When medical students have completed their formal training they undertake a year's pre-registration training, followed by a two-year Foundation programme of general professional training and then 4-6 years in higher medical training which enables them to become a Specialist Registrar and ultimately a consultant, and collectively known as doctors-in-training or junior doctors.

Royal Colleges assessments

The General Medical Council which licences doctors in the UK, and the various Royal Colleges which provide the postgraduate education and training of doctors, have to assess and validate the delivery of postgraduate medical education and training for all specialities, including general practice, across the UK. This includes establishing standards and requirements and ensuring they are met. The monitoring of training, quality standards and outcomes is done through inspection visits to NHS trusts and a visit to the library is included as part of the assessment in order to ensure that the resources needed to support the educational programme is available. In September 2005 this function is to become the responsibility of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board.

<u>Postgraduate Medical Education Contract Monitoring</u>

Funding is made available through NHS Trusts for junior doctors to undertake a range of professional development activities, and Trusts are mandated to provide these opportunities, as well as monitoring such areas as working conditions. In London, the responsibility for postgraduate medical education rests with the London Deanery. Each year the Postgraduate Dean responsible for overseeing the performance and progress of doctors in training undertakes a series of contract monitoring visits to each of the Trusts in Northwest London. A panel consisting of the NHS Chief Executive, Directors of Finance and Human Resources, Director of Postgraduate Medical Education, Library Team Leader and Campus Library Manager meet with Postgraduate Dean. The library staff provide a short update on activities and developments undertaken for doctors in training.

Monitoring delivery of healthcare

<u>Healthcare Commission</u>

The Healthcare Commission (England) promotes improvement in the quality of the NHS and independent healthcare. It has a statutory duty to assess the performance of healthcare organisations and does this through a programme of reviews of the performance of each NHS trust in a three-year cycle. Again, libraries are included in the review and have to provide evidence that they support the information needs of all healthcare staff. As the HeLicon Accreditation is becoming an established method of assessing libraries, assessment grade awarded can be submitted as proof.

Library Weblinks

1. [Imperial College London Strategic Intent and Mission](#)
2. [Library Strategic Directions](#)
3. [Library Service Level Descriptions](#)
4. [Library Annual Report 2003-2004](#)
5. [Library Survey 2003](#)
6. [SCONUL Statistics 2002-2003](#)

Web sites
London Deanery http://www.londondeanery.ac.uk/
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education http://www.qaa.ac.uk/
Research Assessment Exercise http://www.rae.ac.uk/
SCONUL http://www.sconul.ac.uk/

HeLicon Accreditation Scheme
http://nelh.nhs.uk/librarian/accreditation.asp
Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board
http://www.pmetb.org.uk/
M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries
http://www.m25lib.ac.uk/m25sec/business/quality/qualityhome.html
Healthcare Commission
http://www.healthcarecommission.org.uk/Homepage/fs/en