

# Library Strategic Review and Plan 2005-2007

The aim of this document is to indicate broad strategic directions and priorities for the library against a background of profound institutional change over the last two years. The library strategic plan is informed by:

SGUL Corporate Strategy [in process]  
Administrative Restructuring  
Educational Strategy  
Research Strategy  
Strategic Options Review  
NHS South West London Libraries' Strategy  
Strategic Framework for Healthcare Library Services in London 2005-2008

## **SGUL's mission:**

*To promote by excellence in teaching, clinical practice and research the prevention, treatment and understanding of disease*

## **The Library aims to provide:**

*A quality service supporting excellence in teaching, learning, research and clinical practice, to a multidisciplinary user group in the medical and healthcare fields.*

The Library serves the information needs of the staff and students of St. George's, University of London [SGUL], the Joint Faculty of Health and Social Care Sciences [FHSCS] and our partner NHS Trusts including local PCTs [NHS].

## ***The Library aims to actively support teaching, learning, research, clinical practice and patient care by:***

- Providing a welcoming environment conducive to learning – both physical and virtual
- Developing, managing and promoting new and traditional sources of information
- Actively seeking to ascertain the information needs of users and potential users
- Supporting the information needs of a diverse workforce and student population
- Ensuring that users and potential users develop the necessary skills to turn information into knowledge
- Developing services which are monitored and evaluated in conjunction with users and potential users, evolving as needs change
- Recruiting high calibre staff and encouraging excellence through training and development
- Monitor and evaluate services to ensure value for money

## **Background**

### **Strategic Options Review**

The financial difficulties of SGUL in 2002/2003 led to a re-evaluation of its research and teaching priorities in order to achieve a sound financial footing for the future. A Strategic Options Review was undertaken in 2003/2004 to investigate the possibility of closer collaborative working with Kingston University [already a partner institution with the Joint Faculty of Health and Social Care Sciences] and Royal Holloway University of London.

The final joint vision, offers opportunities for library, information and media services to “create a common learning environment and new state of the art visual communication between campuses and across institutions” [extract from “A new strategic partnership in South and West London”, June 2005]

### **Corporate Strategy**

The Medical School’s last Strategic Plan expired in July 2003. The Higher Education Funding Council [HEFCE] allowed the deferment of a new plan pending the outcome of the Strategic Options Review. The strategic context for 2005 – 2010 as outlined by the Director of Administration includes:

“Enhancing the student experience – teaching, learning and quality services, staff/student communication, IT strategy and investment and additional student numbers” [Academic Forum, notes of the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005]

### **Administrative and Central Support Departments Restructuring**

Central Administration and Support Service departments have been grouped into two Directorates under Deputy Heads of Administration. The stated aim is to encourage joint working and better communication to improve service delivery and to exploit economies of scale and investigate areas of duplication in terms of staffing effort and physical space. The Library falls into the group with Registry, Academic Services, Computing Services and Planning & Secretariat.

A further sub-group of Academic, Computing and Library Services is being created under the umbrella of “Teaching and Learning Support”. This process began in September 2005.

### **Student numbers, course expansion and top-up fees**

Following the demise of the UKeU in early 2004 SGUL was permitted to keep the allocated student places along with the funding. The number of additional students will rise to 650 FTE by 2010 on a combination of Foundation degree courses, increased numbers recruited to Biomedical Sciences BSc, masters degree courses and new programmes of joint study with KU/RHUL

A VLE for the Common Foundation Programme was launched in September 2005 and it is expected that it’s use will expand to other programmes of study.

It is largely anticipated that students’ expectations will change as the cost of education is increasingly devolved to the students themselves. Top-up fees are being introduced at SGUL in September 2006.

## **Educational Strategy**

Strategic Objectives [edited extracts from SGUL Educational Strategy as presented to Council on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2005]:

- To work with the NHS and Social Care partners in developing education that is appropriate for changing roles and professions within the service;
- To maintain and develop an innovative educational technology strategy that supports our programmes and links effectively with our key partners;
- To provide a taught postgraduate portfolio that builds upon the expertise at St. George's and our partners, is responsive to the needs of our prospective students, partners in higher education and health and social care services;
- To have resource allocation processes in place to ensure that our courses are delivered in an appropriate and cost effective manner

## **Research Strategy**

“Overall the Research Strategy provides a framework for financial investment [in focussed research themes] in order to achieve the above aims and consolidate St. George's as a major research establishment”, from the Research Strategy document presented to the Executive Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2005 [contents confidential as of 19<sup>th</sup> September]

The focussed areas of research are of particular interest to the Library as we develop our electronic journal portfolio and Collection Development policies in respect of print journal retention.

### **South West London Health Libraries' Strategy 2004-2007 [1]**

### **Strategic Framework for Healthcare Library Services in London 2005-2008 [2]**

Both documents state that “Library and knowledge services improve the quality and effectiveness of patient care by enabling the entire healthcare community to identify, access and appraise information competently, confidently and conveniently” extract from [1].

The main challenge to the library is to deliver information to a distributed population of users wherever and whenever they need it. St. George's Library serves the information needs of St. George's Healthcare NHS Trust, SW London & St. George's Mental Health Trust, and the staff of the 5 local Primary Care Trusts, Wandsworth, Sutton & Merton, Croydon, Kingston and Richmond & Twickenham.

The increased availability of internet services to NHS personnel has enabled access to a wide range of electronic resources funded centrally by the Department of Health, [National Core Content].

Recent developments and partnerships:

- South West London Strategic Health Authority [SWLSHA]
- NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement [replacing the NHS University]
- Library and Knowledge Development Network [LKDN]
- National Library for Health [NLH]
- London Health Libraries

## **Strategic aims from September 2005 to September 2007**

**[Note: Operational Objectives are indicative only and will be expanded and added to in the full Operational Plan ]**

### **Library environment**

The planned expansion in student numbers will place increasing pressure on study places, especially on computer workstations with the development of SGUL's VLE. There are 382 study seats and about 100 workstations available in the library. Although there are other small computer clusters within the building they are not all available to all library users.

Increasing the number of workstations is more problematical as there is no suitable space in the library in which to do so. Wi-fi hotspots have done little to alleviate the pressure in our Computer Rooms during busy periods. We would hope that the institution will include more computer clusters in its long term development plans. These do not have to be in the library. We have plans to make more space available for study tables but it will take some years for the plans to have any impact.

Opening hours have long been a source of complaint. Our hours are generous compared to other HEIs of similar size but there are no other stand-alone medical schools in the UK with which to make direct comparisons. Terms are longer for all but the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year MBBS students, exam timetables extend increasingly across our current closed Saturdays. A submission is being made to SGUL for funding to extend weekend opening.

*[Operational objectives: systematic removal of journal volumes including the current racks, to press for increased numbers of workstations in the institution, implement Sunday opening from April 2006 and monitor closely the use of the library]*

### **Delivering services to the users**

The Library plays a key role in promoting and supporting information literacy. Library staff are involved with academic and professional colleagues in setting up Information Literacy and IT programmes. There will be new challenges with the introduction of an additional VLE. The introduction of Foundation diplomas and degrees also present challenges in training groups of library users who may be less familiar with the learning environment.

The increasing use of the Self-Issue system has allowed us to redeploy staff to the Enquiry Desk where they can offer face to face and telephone help with information queries.

We face challenges with offering quality services to NHS staff and students in the community. The increasing availability of resources via the internet has gone some way to alleviating the problem of access to information but users still require training in the retrieval, evaluation and use of information. We have set up a web based service to support the clinical practice of staff working in St George's Healthcare Trust, Wandsworth PCT and NHS staff in South West London.

*[Operational objectives: supporting the users of the VLE, delivering information services to distributed NHS personnel, supporting the less IT and information literate user, maintain Enquiry Desk staffed hours]*

## **Developing partnerships**

The new strategic partnership with Kingston University and Royal Holloway University of London will bring new opportunities for collaboration. One of the main aims is to create a common learning environment between campuses. There will no doubt be other areas for collaboration over the next few years which will benefit all the information service users of the three institutions.

With a shift in focus to the electronic environment and the National Library for Health, the way we work with the NHS will change. Our role will be to market the services available and raise awareness of how we can train staff to make effective use of the vast array of resources available to them.

The Library is represented on many course committees both in SGUL and FHSCS. Following the formal adoption of the Education and Research Strategies library staff will consolidate links with our academic and research colleagues to ensure we support their aims and objectives.

*[Operational objectives: increase our formal and informal links with our colleagues in information and library services at KU and RHUL, develop liaison with both academics and students at SGUL and FHSCS, develop liaison with our NHS colleagues in the community to deliver services in line with the strategic aims of the South West London Strategic Health Authority]*

## **Human Resources**

We are committed to staff development and our Information Assistant training scheme is well known and respected in the professional community. We have a highly skilled and adaptable staff equipped to deliver a quality service. Our recruitment policies are becoming more flexible to accommodate information professionals from a less traditional academic background [e.g. NVQs].

We have recently made adjustments to working practices to enable us to focus on users rather than processes by extending our “front of house” presence and creating an open-door culture. With the development of our new library services website we aim to offer more assistance to remote library users via the internet.

We will continue to examine what services we offer and what services our users require and endeavour to fill in any gaps in library staff expertise.

*[Operational objectives: maintain and develop our quality Information Assistant training programme, ensure all staff have the opportunities for development and that the training matches the requirements of the job and personal development goals]*

## **Quality and monitoring**

A User Survey is undertaken every 2 years and a journals survey every 3 years. There are opportunities for users to comment or make recommendations on the Library Comments forms. The last User Survey was disappointing in respect of the number of survey forms returned and we will be looking at how we can better engage our users in this type of survey.

Attendance at regular Course Committees within SGUL and FHSCS and regular communication with student representatives provides valuable feedback.

For 2006 we have signed up for LibQUAL+, a nationally and internationally recognised web delivered survey which offers the opportunity to benchmark against other institutions as well as obtaining feedback from our own readers.

Surveying journals is more difficult with the increased purchase of publishers' electronic "bundles", the pricing of which is dependent on the current print spend. This effectively reduces our ability to cancel anything to free up funds for purchasing individual new titles.

However we do have access to many more titles than we would otherwise be able to afford. We completed an analysis of electronic journals usage in autumn 2004 and we were encouraged by the high usage of the bundled titles. Interloans requests are decreasing which is indicative of increased electronic journal availability.

With improved liaison and the creation of NHS user feedback groups, gaps in our services can be overcome and users' true information needs identified and met.

*[Operational objectives: training for LibQUAL+, look at other means of obtaining qualitative data, analyse electronic journal usage in more detail]*

### **Financial resources**

The library is adequately funded for the current size of the readership in respect of non-staff expenditure. We benefit from funding from 3 different sources; SGUL, FHSCS and the NHS through the MADEL/MPET levy. This may change with the introduction of new courses and the projected rise in student numbers.

The cost of electronic resources is consuming an increasing proportion of the stock budget. It is a problem faced by all HEIs. The price of a substantial bundle of journals is still lower than taking out individual electronic subscriptions to research titles. It is unlikely the current model will change in the next few years and Open Access publishing is making little impact on library budgets at the moment.

The NHS benefits from central government funding for its journal licenses and databases. Future National Library for Health developments may influence the way in which NHS library services are delivered and funded.

*[Operational objectives; to closely monitor library expenditure to ensure equitable balance between the funding sources and the users for whom it supports, to maximise expenditure on information resources, to ensure adequate resource funding for new courses]*