

## Introduction

The Consortium, at its meeting on 19 January 1999, agreed to ratify the implementation of a formal agreement for mutual support in the event of a disaster with effect from 1 February 1999. This Mutual Support Agreement (and hereafter referred to as the “Agreement”) is regularly reviewed.

It is generally agreed that the Agreement will be invoked only on rare occasions.

## Definitions

A Library disaster is seen as an event or series of events that significantly disrupts a Library’s ability to support institutional teaching and research over a period of one week or more. Disasters might include major accidents (such as fires or floods) or the sudden unavailability of key staff. Such a disaster may disrupt services (including study facilities) as well as threaten materials. The impact will vary according to the availability of other libraries within the same institution and according to the time of year when the disaster occurs. By their very nature disasters are sudden, unpredictable and severe.

## Objective

The purpose of the Agreement is to enable staff in the affected Library to focus on dealing with the disaster in their institution through the provision of access to study space in other member institutions, and to provide mutual support for colleagues.

Participating member Libraries undertake to apply their best efforts to honouring the principles of the Agreement, but the Agreement confers no rights on individual users, access to member libraries being ultimately at the discretion of the Libraries concerned.

## Service provision

To support this objective Consortium members have agreed, in the event of a disaster, to endeavour to allow staff and students from the affected institution to have access to study space for up to one month after the disaster occurred, providing physical access and services in line with the arrangements in place and normally offered under the SCONUL Research Extra (SRX) and UK Libraries Plus programmes and, for a small number of members, the M25 Consortium Access and Borrowing Scheme.

Where additional support in specialist subject areas is required, InforM25 may be used to identify host Libraries to provide these services, using [www.inform25.ac.uk/Guide/directory](http://www.inform25.ac.uk/Guide/directory). A request for subject-specific support will be made by the Director of the affected Library. This specialised subject-specific support will be provided after negotiation and exchange of letters between the Directors of the host and affected Libraries.

Any variations on the standard agreement, for example, to provide specialist services such as access to Inter-Library Loans or access to networked electronic resources would be provided only after specific negotiation and exchange of letters between the Directors of the host and affected Libraries.

Liability arrangements for the affected and host Libraries will operate in a similar way to the UK Libraries Plus programme.

## **Activating the Agreement**

The Director of the affected Library will arrange to inform all members of the Consortium that the disaster has occurred via the M25 Directors' email list, in order to activate these arrangements. The Agreement will be invoked in appropriate circumstances, for example, where sufficient study space cannot otherwise be provided from within the institution's own resources.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

These arrangements are intended to provide basic mutual support in the event of a disaster affecting a Consortium member Library. At the conclusion of the period in which the Mutual Support Agreement has been invoked, the Directors of the affected and host Libraries will be encouraged to evaluate the process and to feed their comments to the M25 Steering Group or nominated representative.

## **Dissemination**

As part of their internal disaster planning and risk management strategies, M25 Consortium Directors are encouraged to advise their staff of the details of the Mutual Support Agreement, and the rights and responsibilities of the affected and host Libraries.