

M25 CONSORTIUM OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Strategic Plan 2010/11 - 2012/13

Introduction

The M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries is a collaborative organisation that represents academic and research libraries within the M25 region and more widely across the East and Southeast. Its membership ranges from large university libraries to smaller specialist institutions within and beyond the HE sector. Between them, these libraries contain over 30 million volumes and a rich variety of specialised collections and resources that not only support students and staff within these institutions but attract scholars from across the world. Founded in 1993 the Consortium has taken the lead in expanding access to libraries through the M25 Access and Borrowing Scheme, developed a suite of resource discovery services that enable searching across the catalogues of member institutions and, through cpd25, offered an extensive programme of training activities for staff in Consortium libraries that, in 2007, received the CILIP seal of approval.

This Strategic Plan was drafted following consultation with representatives at a workshop in September 2009 and subsequently through the Directors' Room, and approved by members at the Consortium's annual general meeting in April 2010.

Mission of the Consortium

To develop and improve access to library and information services across the region in support of learning and research, by facilitating co-operation amongst Consortium members and by collaborating with relevant regional and national organisations.

Strategic objectives

This Strategic Plan identifies four core objectives to support this mission:

- Supporting staff in member libraries to enable them to develop and deliver effective library and information services
- Collaborating between member institutions and developing shared services in support of learning and research
- Working with partners and seeking to influence funders and policy makers to improve the experience of learners and researchers who use library and information services in the Consortium and beyond

- Ensuring effective and efficient governance, financial management, use of technology and marketing and communication to underpin Consortium activities.

This Plan sets out the Consortium's three year strategy. Detailed operational plans will be agreed on an annual basis and updates provided to Consortium members at the annual general meeting.

1. Supporting our staff to develop and deliver services

Developing staff knowledge, skills and abilities to improve the services that libraries provide to learners and researchers has always been a core activity of the Consortium. In the next planning period we aim to build upon the thriving cpd25 training and professional development programme and the existing Consortium networking activities and ensure the effective utilisation of new technologies in support of this strategic objective.

To achieve this, the Consortium will do the following.

1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- a. Continue to deliver high quality staff development activities geared to the needs of members and in recognition of the increasingly wide range of roles and duties performed by staff in member libraries.
- b. Explore the ways in which training and professional development activities can be delivered through the appropriate use of technology.
- c. Extend opportunities for staff in member libraries to participate in coaching and mentoring and related activities for professional development.
- d. Review the provision of development opportunities for staff who aspire to more senior roles.
- e. Create opportunities for a wider range of staff to participate in Consortium projects to further their professional development and support succession planning.

2. NETWORKING

- a. Exploit the potential of the development of the Directors' Room and sustain the creation / development of new online networking tools or communities of practice in support of identified staff groups.
- b. Develop opportunities for a broader range of staff in member libraries to participate in Consortium group activities and face -to-face and virtual networks.

3. SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

- a. Develop a repository of resources on the web site to facilitate the sharing of good practice, support staff development activities and complement the networking opportunities offered through the Directors' Room.

2. Shared services and collaboration in support of learning and research

The Consortium's origins lay in a desire to increase access by researchers to university libraries within the region. This led to the development of collaborative resource discovery tools and InforM25 which remains one of the core M25 services. More recently there has been a focus within the sector on shared services and this will come to prominence during this planning period.

The Consortium will continue to work collaboratively to support its mission of developing services and improving access for learners and researchers to the diverse and in many cases specialist and internationally renowned libraries of member institutions.

To achieve this objective the Consortium will do the following.

1. COLLABORATION IN SUPPORT OF LEARNING AND RESEARCH
 - a. Continue to support reciprocal schemes that provide access rights for researchers in all member institutions to research libraries, focusing particularly on non-HE libraries that are not covered by existing national schemes.
 - b. Keep a watching brief on developments within LIS services specifically and affecting learners and researchers generally and explore opportunities for collaboration between Consortium members for mutual benefit.
 - c. Utilise task and finish groups to manage discrete projects and harness the expertise of staff in member libraries.
2. SHARED SERVICES
 - a. Continue to support and develop Consortium resource discovery services and, during this planning period, carry out a review of the current InforM25 suite of services and set out a strategy for their future development.
 - b. Explore opportunities for other Consortium shared services, which may include partnerships with other organisations/consortia.
 - c. Cultivate an environment that facilitates scanning for and identifying opportunities for the collaborative potential of the Consortium to develop joint funding bids.
3. FOSTERING RESEARCH SUPPORT ACROSS SECTORS
 - a. Promote access to the rich research materials of the Consortium membership through showcasing specialist collections and promoting access to these across sector boundaries.
 - b. Explore opportunities for collaboration between member institutions from different sectors and promote the benefits of such collaborations as part of our advocacy activities.
 - c. Specifically identify mechanisms to support the learning and research activities of non-HE research libraries
4. MUTUAL SUPPORT
 - a. Maintain a mutual support agreement, as a core element of membership, to assist members with disaster recovery and business continuity, and review this agreement

during the current planning period.

5. VALUE FOR MONEY

- a. Identify opportunities to enable members to add value and work more efficiently through collaboration, and ensure that Consortium structures and communication methods encourage members in Consortium libraries to develop and put forward proposals
- b. Investigate the scope for more effective means of procurement alongside existing national and local schemes.

3. Looking outwards: influence and partnerships

The Consortium seeks to influence funders and policy makers within and beyond the LIS community in order to improve the experience of learners and researchers who use the library and information services in the Consortium and beyond. The Consortium has a distinctive regional identity and as such can play a part in the development of sector-wide projects by acting as a pilot group or developing initiatives with the expectation that they can be scaled up to national level if successful.

To achieve this objective the Consortium will do the following.

1. INFLUENCE AND ADVOCACY

- a. Increase the visibility of the Consortium through more effective promotion in professional publications etc.
- b. Ensure that non-member libraries eligible for membership are aware of the benefits to their learners and researchers of Consortium membership.
- c. Raise awareness of the rich diversity of resources available in the libraries of Consortium members.
- d. Focus its advocacy activities on specific issues that directly relate to the needs and concerns of members.
- e. Provide input to national initiatives and consultation exercises, where the Consortium has a distinct perspective.

2. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- a. Continue to develop links and partnerships with key regional and national agencies
- b. Explore areas of common interest and mutual collaboration with similar regional academic library consortia.
- c. Work with partners in other sectors on specific initiatives that support wider sector or government aims (e.g. Inspire, collaboration with NHS).

3. WORKING WITH PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN RELATED SERVICES

- a. Recognise the increasing convergence of interests of libraries with other student-facing services and explore opportunities to work with professional organisations beyond the LIS community to support the development of emerging services to

support learning and research.

4. INNOVATIVE PROJECTS

- a. Undertake, either within Consortium resources or by bidding for external funds, innovative projects that will benefit researchers and learners using library and information services within the region and which have the potential to be scaled up if successful.
- b. Look for opportunities to participate, as partners, in external projects, where these relate to the strategic objectives of the Consortium.

4. Efficiency and effectiveness: activities that support our work

Consortium activity is underpinned by efficient governance, administrative and finance structures, effective communication and marketing tools, and the deployment of emerging technologies.

To ensure these are in place the Consortium will do the following.

1. GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- a. Review and update the Consortium's governance documents and rules for the conduct of business.
- b. Foster a more responsive and agile approach through a review of working groups and the increased use of task and finish groups.
- c. Review the activities of the Support Team and its relationship with the Consortium committees and groups, to ensure an effective link between strategic goals and operational activities.

2. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- a. Ensure robust and transparent financial management, accounts and auditing procedures in line with charitable status and requirements for companies.
- b. Move to a balanced budget within two years and review the Consortium's reserves policy.
- c. Explore the potential fund-raising and other benefits for the Consortium arising out of its charitable status.
- d. Explore other opportunities for income generation through sponsorship, project bids etc.

3. TECHNOLOGY

- a. Make best use of relevant emerging technologies in the development of Consortium services, activities and methods of communication
- b. Ensure appropriate staffing and other resources are in place to facilitate the use of new technologies.

4. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

- a. Develop a marketing strategy for the Consortium to encompass both external advocacy and internal communication
- b. Develop the web site(s) to be the core support tool for Consortium activities such as networking, professional development, shared services etc.

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Key projects 2010/11

The table below sets out the key Consortium projects proposed for 2010/11 and agreed by the Steering Group at its meeting on 18 March 2010. These are arranged in the order of the Strategic Plan.

This list comprises specific projects and excludes ongoing Consortium activities e.g. delivery of high quality staff development activities through cpd25, support of the InforM25 suite of resource discovery services, development of the Directors' Room etc .

At this stage this is a draft list of key projects as the incoming Chair may wish to review the Consortium's plans for the forthcoming year.

	Project	Link to Strategic Plan
1	Launch the "Staff Room" as an online networking tool alongside the "Directors' Room" to facilitate networking between staff in Consortium libraries	Strategic Plan 1.2.a.
2	Review and develop the M25 repository of resources on the web site to facilitate the sharing of good practice, support staff development (etc)	Strategic Plan 1.3.a.
3	Utilise task and finish groups to manage discrete projects and harness the expertise of staff in member libraries	Strategic Plan 2.1.c.
4	Implement recommendations of the InforM25 review	Strategic Plan 2.2.a
5	Complete and implement the review of Consortium marketing and advocacy activities	Strategic Plan 3.1.
6	Run a series of marketing events to promote Consortium activities and services	Strategic Plan 3.1.
7	Respond to the SCONUL report on shared services as appropriate	Strategic Plan 3.1.e.

8	Explore areas of common interest and mutual collaboration with similar regional academic library consortia by arranging a meeting with representatives of other regional consortia	Strategic Plan 3.2.b.
9	Take forward the WAM25 project – if sufficient external funding is available ¹	Strategic Plan 3.4.a.
10	Review and update the Consortium’s governance documents	Strategic Plan 4.1.a.
11	Review the Consortium’s reserves policy with the aim of achieving a balanced budget	Strategic Plan 4.2.b.
12	Explore the potential for fund-raising arising from the Consortium’s charitable status	Strategic Plan 4.2.c.

Nick Bevan
Chair
March 2010

¹ As at March 2010, the Consortium is waiting to hear from HEFCE about whether funding will be available