

User Advisory Forum minutes – Senate House Library (SHL) Monday 21 February 2022 - 11:00-12:30 Online meeting - Microsoft Teams

Chair: Catriona Cannon (CC) **Minutes:** Lisa Miller (LM)

Attending: Catriona Cannon (CC), Richard Espley (RE), James Cook (JC), Alea Baker (AB), Lisa Miller

(LM), Forum members (FM)

	Minutes	Action/Outcome
1	Welcome and introductions CC welcomed everyone to the session, introduced the agenda and gave apologies. Staff and forum members were then invited to introduce themselves to the group.	
2	Collections and services updates and Library Transformation Programme (LTP) CC LTP update CC is continuing to work on the LTP with a plan for the next 3-5 years and is beginning to take shape. RE and JC will take us through projects which will form the basis for the LTP. Focus since the last meeting is on changes to SHL staff structure to put us in right place for LTP. This included replacing staff who have left and looking at interim management arrangements. The two posts for the senior team have been filled and two deputy directors, Pete Williams comes to us from Birkbeck and will start at the end of March and will be the Deputy Director for Services and Catherine Stephen comes to us from the University of Surrey and will be Deputy Director of Collections and will start at the beginning of April. They will also be key members of the team in delivering the LTP.	

SHL is following the central university in changes to ensure people are sitting in teams of fellow professionals. The Library IT team has moved to the university IT and Digital Section (ITDS). The Engagement team which was an interim arrangement have moved to Strategic Comms and Marketing Department which is why Rebecca Simpson (RS) is no longer chairing the meeting. LM has moved to Customer Services and continues to work on library and user engagement.

Questions

FM asked a question about if there are issues when moving people to different areas with management priorities and decisions as the decision making may take place somewhere else and how is that managed?

CC answered, that's a really good point and that's the argument against centralisation. We have had a few months to try it out and so far, it is working well and continue to meet team directors and work on the new digital strategy for the university. It is important that this is woven into together and not to undertake separate things.

With communications, that is also working well and continue to have strong links with RS and Head of Comms.

Finance has had a restructure. Advantages to centralisation are more opportunities for promotion and allows the university to achieve more collectively. The disadvantages may be losing some of that local control. Careful to mitigate the disadvantages.

FM I guess as long as it is working so far and that is good, keeping an eye on it.

RE update

RE Gave an update on the foundational projects CC mentioned. The first is a product SHL will invest in called Green Glass. It will have a significant impact on what we do. It is a collection management tool that will allow us to compare all the holdings of Senate House Library and all of the SAS (School of Advanced Study) libraries to one another and to datasets from the entire world and various groups within London and the UK. It will have significant benefits for the library and allow for the first time the extent of

duplicate books we hold between SHL and other libraries in the Central University and SAS libraries. It will also allow us to work out how many duplicate copies of the same book we have within SHL.

SHL catalogue data has been built up over a long time and ingested data from other libraries so we cannot tell automatically when we have more than one copy of the same book. It is also going to give us a really good opportunity to show how strong the libraries together in Senate House are on a national and an international level and allow us to compare our holdings to the combined holdings of the Federal University of London. This might lead to some withdrawals, some deduplication work where we have another copy elsewhere and will support our drive to move from print books to eBooks. RE mentioned that an eBook is 12 times more likely to be read than a brand new print book.

Finally, if we have a bad catalogue record, the product will identify exactly what it is and allow us to automatically download a really good catalogue record at the end of the process. There are a lot of benefits to the library, the university, but critically for our readers and users too. The contracts have been signed and we hope that all the work will be listed and in train before the end of the next financial year.

The other important project is to rationalise and sort out the way the Central University, SHL, all the libraires in SAS and University of London Worldwide (who are delivering distance learning to people around the world), how we subscribe to and purchase and license electronic content – eResources. To address the complexity of authentication we are going into a major assessment exercise with Jisc who will assist in uniting licenses for eResources right across the Central University so that people only have to log in once which will lead to smoother access.

The second phase of this with the support of Jisc is to hopefully explore the potential for us to buy eResources with part or all the federal members of the university with one point of access through shared catalogues. It involves a lot of work but has to happen.

Questions

FM said both initiatives sound really valuable with huge benefits to the users and I guess everyone running each of the different libraries. It's going to be massive, so thank you in advance.

RE said it is a pleasure and exciting talking about it.

RE also mentioned Rapid ILL another service SHL will be introducing to manage inter-library loans. We will be joining a large national consortium; this will be most helpful for electronic journal content. If we do not have a subscription to a journal article which is available digitally elsewhere, in most cases it will be available free of charge to our users and free of charge to your institution within a couple of hours or 24 hours.

FM asked if this applies to international libraries and in the US.

RE It does apply to some US libraries but applies in the consortium in the UK which includes the largest libraries in the UK and includes copyright libraries. The response rate is 99.8% of requests that are met. It is always possible that there will be something there.

FM asked if it will benefit students who need access to material from Europe. There was a point a year or so ago when students had real difficulty accessing French journals. Lots of us need access to foreign language things produced in European countries.

RE It will deliver those foreign language things where a British institution that is a member of the consortium has a subscription to them. There are no European members of the service, the consortium includes the Bodleian and Cambridge. We are going to be able to deliver the vast majority of content. The only thing it will not allow us to do is share that content on a reading list or shared in a VLE, and that is a hard licensing restriction. It just allows us to share under the fair use copyright legislation. It allows us to share it with individuals.

CC added that one of the advantages to working more closely with the SAS libraries, the Institute of Modern Languages research and we being their library and the other SAS libraries is that they have very strong foreign language materials. I think if we are working together on resources we can focus our efforts here. Not necessarily getting more for our money but it does allow us to be

probably a little more strategic in how we spend money and modern languages as you know is a very important area for us and continues to be.

JC update

JC updated on the work their team is primarily working on in returning some collections from commercial storage. 9,200 linear metres of library stock that is in commercial storage at present. This is following library projects in 2016 and 2019. The material has been available to request this whole time, but we are now looking to return that over time within two locations in Senate House and Stewart House or in the depository in Egham. The plan should take around six months hopefully around mid-April to the end of September. This will improve access to the material. Library staff will be able to retrieve material and it will improve the preservation of material as they will be within our own stores. It will allow staff to work on material more effectively rather than ordering from a commercial store.

There is a lot of preparatory work that people may start to notice as we are compacting material to enable us to move the geography collection down from the 7th to the 6th floor and returning that small space to closed access storage. We will then be able to work on uncatalogued material.

We have also been working at the depository to list and review legacy periodical print holdings, SHL and formerly the University of London co-operative store with 1,500 periodical print titles, 1000 linear metres with a view to holdings elsewhere and doing the same with UK Parliamentary Paper holdings. The vast majority are held in perpetuity through Proquest and available free online from the UK Government. Looking to review 900 metres of print Parliamentary Papers with a view to slimming that down in order not to return it from offsite storage.

JC further updated on other work including re-spacing the open access collections on floors 4,5,6 and 7 following extensive weeding and relegations to the depository and deduplication. Presently reallocating in order so that collections fit more comfortably on the shelving and updating and improving end of bay classmark and subject browsing guides throughout. In addition, with almost all periodical subscriptions now digital, what was the periodicals room is now the home for the new Library of Congress monograph acquisitions which have been moved from the temporary shelving into the fitted bookcase shelving.

Following the reduction in social distancing, we have managed to re-increase library spaces to around 400 with an overall total of 500 including carrels, the PC's and comfortable seating. We have recently opened three group study spaces on the 5th floor and a dedicated food and drink area on the 4th floor which we have not had before. It allows people to eat and drink without having to leave the library and where it is not going to damage stock or cause inconvenience to others.

The team has been working with Estates and Facilities management, sustainability teams and contractors to improve heating and lighting in the library. To monitor and reduce its carbon footprint, the University heating and cooling policy is that library spaces will not be heated above 21 degrees plus or minus 2 degrees. The team actively monitor the temperature in the library to make sure it is as close to that as possible.

JC mentioned the sensor lighting which is energy efficient LED lighting in most areas. Lighting is forced on during opening hours. Complicated building management system and to let staff know if there is anything you aware of that is not working.

The library has also had an upgrade to the CCTV. Digital cameras have replaced the analogue cameras and new cameras have been added to all the exits and are networked to the university security control. The re-fitting and replacement of exit guards has also been completed.

Questions

FM commented on how brilliant it is to have a dedicated food and drink area. When students are studying and they have to leave the building. They are often out much longer than anticipated and sometimes do not come back. It is brilliant to give students the opportunity to stay in the library, perhaps exchange with other students and then get back to their desks.

JC It certainly helps. It is something that divides opinion. there are always people who are vehemently against it and there are people who are really for it. This tries to bridge both camps without particularly upsetting either.

FM asked about the new acquisitions section on the 4th floor, are there any plans either now or most likely in the future to integrate those materials into the main family or home collections? It seems like especially when it comes from a literature point of view. I am finding that I am going to have to go

between two or more different floors to find the books that I need instead of just going to one place directly. That might not be a plan for the immediate future, but hopefully eventually that will happen. I just wanted to put that out.

CC took the question and answered that there was a plan and I reversed it. I am not saying it is not important, it is important but pending the library transformation programme it was going to cost a lot of money. I just did not feel the time was right. With all the priorities we had, I reversed it last summer when I arrived. It is something we are aware of from a reader point of view but also from a staff and efficiency point of view needs to be done. There are no immediate plans, but it is an issue we are aware of.

JC added that we did get a certain degree down the road to doing it, at least in the data way. That data is still there and available to us. So it is something that could potentially be picked up again in future when we come a little bit further to being out the other side of the library transformation programme.

CC followed up that the idea for the eating and drinking space came out of a Customer Services team meeting from staff so will pass the good feedback to the team.

CC update

Further updates included that we recently introduced a reference only membership and CC also updated on recent engagement activities including History Day and associated blogs, the inclusivity review and case study, SHL 150 staff and member favourite items, sound installation in the Court Room to celebrate Harry Price HRC funded project, first hybrid engagement event celebrating 50 years of Terry Pratchett's The Carpet People with agent Colin Smythe and Foundation Day, the University event for honorary degrees. CC said there were some fantastic graduands and the Chancellor, Princess Anne, mentioned the library in her speech several times. Our Special Collections Librarian put a display up with links to the graduands. We are working on some engagement events that are early in the planning. We hope that one of them will launch in the summer and we hope to be able to tell you more about that soon.

To update members on launch dates for engagement events - LM

3 Digitisation projects and online user access followed by Q&A

AB talked about her role as Digitisation Co-ordinator and previous roles within the library and noted that in spending time with users and enquiries the huge demand for digital services and how that has grown. Researchers from all over the world want access to our

physical materials in a digital format, and that desire and demand is only going to get stronger due to the changes in the way students in academics perform their research. AB mentioned the digital developments and the commitment of library management and the University to pursue these and to update our digital infrastructure and how Covid has played a part in this.

AB described the significant work done to make our collections more available online over the last few years. The scope of Senate House Library archive collections. With almost 2000 archive collections. 500 rare book collections. One estimate is almost 1,000,000 individual items within those collections. A letter, a poster, a scrapbook would be an item in this case. That is an enormous amount of material to digitise. It would take decades. To digitise all this and make available online is a long way off.

AB talked about the recent digitisation projects - the De Morgan project. How Morgan was a British mathematician from the 19th century. His library contains almost 4000 items on mathematics and its history printed between 1474 and 1870. The publisher Brill has set out to digitise all of our collection in nine parts and to create a resource just for this collection. Significant works in this collection include 'The 6 books concerning the revolutions of the heavenly orbs' by Nicolas Copernicus. SHL has several editions of this book, but most notably the 1st edition, which AB said revolutionized astronomy and arguably many other areas at the time by stating that the earth revolves around the sun.

AB described the project called decolonization. A new resource produced by Cengage, also known as Dale. SHL is providing around 60% of the material for this platform, which means most of what you see on this resource will be coming from Senate House Library. They are currently digitising over 10,000 political pamphlets from the Institute of Commonwealth Studies Collections. AB described items including a copy of statements given by the leaders of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party to the police in 1972, A kissing file by South African information program of the International University Exchange Fund and the intimate detailing of the destruction from the battle of Kasanga in 1978. This resource should be available in the Autumn 2022.

Another current project is called far left political extremism also from Cengage. Cengage have done several of these political extremism resources and they have already done the far right and now will be completing the far left module. We are providing over 3000 items from various collections, mostly coming from our Heisler Collections. The Heisler collection currently has

approximately 25,000 books, 20,000 pamphlets, 3000 journals and newspapers, and it is continually growing. It mostly relates to labour and radical political movements and political expression in art. AB said that the pamphlet collection are great examples of small press or self published ephemera and most are very rare and unique.

AB described an illustrated pamphlet based on a book called Bright Red Star, which was published in 1974. Described as a propaganda piece for Communist China, it has some beautiful illustrations. Another item for the project 'a squatters handbook' from 1974 and has legal advice for anyone who is a squatter.

AB then ended the talk by giving examples of how to browse digital resources using the A-Z Databases list -

https://senatehouselibrary.libguides.com/az.php the list of subject options and database types which included digitised UoL special collections and archives. The A-Z list which shows clearly who has access and any restrictions and if resources are available offsite or onsite only.

Questions

FM asked when items are digitized, are they necessarily automatically sort of tucked away somewhere else so that it is more difficult to get hold of or not? Because obviously sometimes you need to see the original document to see where perhaps corrections have been made and things that do not necessarily come up on the digitisation.

AB In regard to storage, after something has been digitized, we do try to prioritize keeping things on site that are not digitized because that means that we do not have another way that people can access it. We do tend to put things more in storage that have been digitized but we always have access to our physical materials and it is quite easy to request them from offsite for Special Collections. We do still want people to obviously have access to the physical materials because the digitised version is a substitute, but it is not the real thing. As you said, there can be watermarks or annotations that do not get picked up when things are digitized. The vendors that digitize our material do well. They usually do really high quality images. But as you say, it's still not the real thing so we do always still try to make things available and as easy as possible.

FM When they are digitized are they available online as discrete items or were they kind of threaded through so you can follow

the trail of something then their response to it and the consequences of it.

AB I think the individual items will have a link on the catalogue to the digitized platform and we are working towards when we digitize something inhouse like smaller requests and making those immediately available on our catalogue so that you can see the image right away. That clearly depends on copyright and if it was digitized before, but we are trying to make the images as easily accessible as possible even from an individual catalogue record. If you find something you like, hopefully it should be really easy just to go straight to the resource that is on it and straight to the image itself.

FM I am also thinking that, for example because you have got all these amazing items and they are presented to us as one offs and yes, they are valuable as one offs but also, they are valuable as part of the narrative through time. Whether they are linked somehow to other documents that might allow you to explore the implications or the consequences of the first item that we have been able to see for example.

AB We do have lists of what collections are put on what platform but as far as seeing easily online what has been digitized for which platform, as you say, like under a subject umbrella, we do not have that yet but that is a really good idea to see what physical items we have. To show all the things that are related to that and have been used for that resource that is a good idea, but it is not as easy as it sounds to create.

CC added that we have some very high quality metadata that describes the originals of these and that those catalogue records also help with that kind of serendipity, following through one thing, suggest another suggests another, and so wherever possible we link the metadata that we have in our catalogues, whether that is the archive catalogue or the book catalogue through to the digitized resource. But you know that it would be honest to say that is something most research libraries are still grappling with to make these things more navigable and more easily discoverable. What you have touched on is one of our key challenges as a community and as a sector and if we cannot crack this problem where that kind of richness and the potential for research is lessened on these amazing unique collections and the digital versions of them.

AB I would say that currently the only easy way to do that is to have access to the resource itself and then you can filter and

specify for Senate House library and then you can see all the materials that we provided for that resource. You cannot really do that currently with our own catalogue, which is restrictive. But it is something that hopefully can be addressed in the future.

FM This is not an answer to the question, but it is interesting that the BNF the French National Library has a bit like an Amazon thing. People have looked at this have also looked at this.

AB said, like a recommendation, kind of banner or something. That is a nice idea.

RE added that it is fantastic to see these things being mentioned. In terms of the linking to other items. The vast majority of cases if our content has been digitized on a platform and you find you happen to say you are looking at Victorian Popular Culture and you happen to find something from the Harry Price library and you can, if you are persistent then ask that resource where can I see everything else from Senate House Library which has been included in this resource. In almost every case, these massive platforms will allow you to then play around within them to see what has come from Senate House. The huge challenge for us and the huge opportunity comes in a few years time when those images can come off these commercial platforms and we can do what we like with them and group them together as we want and that is both really exciting and terrifying to think about structuring something like that.

AB responded, that is a good point. I'd like to mention that our publishers, licenses these images from us, we can't then put all of the images that they have created on our catalogue to group everything together easily for our users. They would have to go to that specific platform to do that. We could maybe list things like classmark and bibliographic information, but we couldn't then provide the images ourselves. We would have to still link it to that platform. I do like the idea of recommending and seeing other things that are similar to that.

CC the restrictions of providing our content for these essentially commercial products, but ones that most university libraries will subscribe to is one of the reasons why we are trying to diversify our digitisation efforts. We are looking at alternative ways to digitize that don't tie us into these commercial contracts. We very much benefit from these commercial products and no wish to stop doing that, but I think we need to also build up some other kinds of digitisation projects. But digitisation is a highly skilled and time-

consuming effort so we need to think carefully about how we will do that. To inform forum 4 **Senate House Library User Survey Questionnaire** members when CC said how we greatly value the forum as one of the ways in the user survey is which we gather feedback from our users about how services and live - LM collections are being used and what people think of them. CC then gave examples of the various ways we collect information about the services and collections that we provide to find out whether we are getting it right or not. CC mentioned the user survey SHL runs bi-annually, the quantitative data we collect about how many times things are used and that the library is about to re-engage in a nationwide survey where we can benchmark that data against quantitative data from other university libraries. CC then introduced LM to talk specifically about the SHL user survey and the discussions we have had so far within our senior management team (SMT), about the survey and questionnaire and how it was decided at that team meeting to ask for the help and feedback from members of the user forum. LM asked the group if they had any comments or feedback on the survey questionnaire distributed in advance of the meeting and asked how we could improve the survey and questionnaire. That we are also asking staff within the library for feedback on what to include and any improvements to make. LM suggested that feedback could be how long the survey takes to complete, what questions we ask and what to include in the future services section. Also, looking at what we have introduced since the 2020 survey and gave examples of these. Once all the feedback has been received, we will use that information to review the current questionnaire and for designing and constructing the new user survey with a view to publish late spring. LM read some feedback received from a forum member who could not make the meeting which included adding more detail to Q1. if there are patterns to visits, e.g., time of day etc. and in Q4. reasons for ratings and what can be improved.

Comments and feedback

FM said the only thing I would mention and I agree that the questions and the length are probably about right, is and it was difficult to tell, but do you have to answer every question? One of the things I find really irritating with these surveys is if you know for any reason the question isn't relevant, you don't answer it, but then it doesn't let you move on because you haven't answered every single question and it might be worth just thinking about whether you can make it optional to answer every question.

LM asked if we should include the option to skip a question?

FM Either, whatever is easier for you. But I think often the questions assume that they make sense and they obviously make sense to the questioner, but they may not for some reason make sense to the person being questioned.

FM I also thought it would be good to add non applicable because even though some questions might not apply to people, some people might just skip it. Other people might just put anything in, just say I'm dissatisfied or something in the middle just to answer it. Then it's harder to interpret the results obviously. Whereas if you have the option to just say, I don't know something about eResources, they just say ok, it's not applicable to me. Then it's clear.

LM asked about the last free text question about any additional comments and how useful that is. Whether to have that in different categories or just have the one box.

FM Personally, I think it is best to keep it free form because otherwise you're directing people into particular areas, and that's not necessarily what you want to do there.

FM I agree

FM Did it have anything about practices and other libraries that people would want to recommend, and if not, that might be worth asking a question at the end because everybody uses several libraries and there are always things that are done better or worse in various places. Something like, are there any suggestions that you might make on the basis of your use of other libraries or something like that?

LM added, so things that you like about other libraries that you would like Senate House to consider.

FM I'm looking at question seven. Are you happy with the current opening hours and the linguist in me is shying away from all those shoulds? I would really, like it if the library were open on a Sunday, but I wouldn't want to go so far as to say should. I think, should is a really strong verb.

CC Just to say opening hours is something that's come up a lot and we are working on it. It's a difficult problem, but we are really actively working on it and we didn't say anything today because we don't really have anything to concrete to say to you, but we do hope to have something concrete to say to you soon. When we talked about this at our management team meeting, it was a bit difficult because we ask people all the time about opening hours, but we actually haven't changed them as yet. So, it feels kind of difficult to be going out and asking people the same question when we actually haven't done anything about it yet.

FM well, I think in the light of COVID, nobody would actually expect any alteration to opening hours anyway.

FM I'm wondering in Q3. Thinking back to your last visit. If this is a question going forward, you might want to stick something in about the new eating drinking space and that you could possibly put that in Q3. Thinking about your last few visits, did you leave the premises or did you make use of the eating drinking space?

LM Definitely hoping to incorporate the new services that were introduced into that section. So, move them from the future services section into Q3. To find out if people have taken advantage of these new services.

CC we got so far in our Senior Management Team meeting and then we thought we would ask the advisory forum so that has been very helpful.

FM I was just going to say when you've got Q4. How satisfied are you over.....? There isn't an opportunity to say why you've said that and I think if I were dissatisfied or even very dissatisfied, I might really want to say why and also if I were very satisfied, then I'd want to highlight the things that I have been really pleased with and the individuals perhaps that have been brilliant on whatever occasion.

LM that's a fair point. So possibly to have a follow up question related to that.

FM or just space like you've got in the open ended question. Why you have given us this rating.

AB is there a question about how easy users find accessing our online resources and if it's very easy, not very easy and what issues they may come across because I think that's quite an important question to ask our users. If they are finding the material they need and if it has a digital option might be a good thing to ask because then we can survey are we getting the right stuff to the right people. Is it easy for them to access online? Are there questions like that in there?

LM there are questions on whether people are using them, but not how they are finding it. When they do use them.

AB I would be really interested to hear that and to hear if we are providing a digital option for them when they need it because that would be an interesting question to know as well.

5 **AOB**

Depository

FM asked about the depository. I would just really love to know what is in the depository at Egham. I thought it's just like an underground bunker. I post my books when I'm finished with them and I didn't actually realize there is all sorts of stuff in there. What James was saying about the journals that are in there. I had no idea. I would love to know more.

JC answered that the depository was built in the late 50s and early 60s as a combined store for the for the University of London and it wasn't run by Senate House Library or the University of London Library as we were then. It was a separate part of the university. He described the different stores held there for Senate House Library, Royal Holloway, LSE, King's, UCL, SSEES when it was separate from UCL. The different institutes had their own stores and was a mixture of private stores and cooperative stores. Private stores where for example, only people from King's could order that material and it only got sent to King's and then there was a cooperative store where any college from any part of the university and ourselves could put material into the cooperative store, and then it could be ordered by and used by anybody in the federation. That ceased in the 80s and it was closed when the

Investigate the possibility to view materials discussed in the meeting at the next session-LM/AB

university wound up the department that ran the depository and asked Senate House Library to take over the management of it and we have been managing it since the early 90s as a store. It still functions in similar sort of ways. Senate House Library has its own materials down there in the store and we also lease space to college libraries and to other external clients as well.

Next meeting

CC mentioned that we would like to welcome forum members back with a physical meeting next time and providing a hybrid option for those that can't make it in person and look to find a date when people are already in the area. CC also mentioned the possibility of some viewings of the digitised items spoken about in the session.

CC thanked forum members and showed her appreciation for the role they play in making sure the library gets things right, and thanked colleagues for presentations and organising the session.

Date of next meeting - Monday 6 June 2022