

JOINT STATEMENT ON PROJECT 2000

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In October 1990 The Library Association convened a meeting of all parties interested in the provision of library and information services to support Project 2000 courses. Representatives from COPUL, SCONUL and the Regional Librarians Group attended as well as members of the Nursing Information Subgroup and the Colleges of Further and Higher Education (CoFHE) group of The Library Association. The major concern was that the necessary resources would not be forthcoming to support the increased standard of library and information services needed to support a higher education course. It was felt that a joint statement from the main library bodies concerned would be useful in helping to make the case for proper resourcing of library and information services to the national boards, the Department of Health and the appropriate authorities at regional level. The draft statement is provided below and members are welcome to submit comments on it to Guy Daines at The Library Association (7 Ridgmount Street, London, WC1 7AE) as soon as possible. It is hoped to have the final draft ready by February 1992.

Project 2000 and Library and Information Provision - Draft statement

Introduction

1. The reforms in nursing education as represented by the Project 2000 initiative are to be welcomed. The philosophy behind these reforms embraces the concept of a research-based profession and makes greater demands on the student and teacher in terms of both the breadth and depth of knowledge required. It includes the shift from a didactic approach to teaching to a student-centred, resource-based style of learning with the accent on self-directed study and the acquisition of the relevant information-handling and study skills.
2. The new courses, as explicitly higher education courses, are fundamentally different from those they replace. The successful implementation of these reforms requires the provision of well-resourced library and information services under the management of professional librarians able both to provide the learning materials necessary to support courses and to teach information and study skills. Library and information services need to be comparable with those offered in other areas of higher education and to be similarly rooted in an educational framework.

Present library provision for nursing in the UK

3. Present library and information services provided within the NHS, and those organisations contracted to provide services from outside, vary enormously from the totally inadequate to the well-resourced and innovative services able to respond to the changing demands of users. As a recent survey (1) of libraries involved in Project 2000 work suggests there is a great disparity in the resourcing and staffing of library and

information services. Some colleges do not even employ professional librarians at site libraries. This is at a time when Project 2000 has occasioned a demonstrable increase in demand on library and information services from students and academic staff, reflecting the research-based nature and higher education status of the new courses.

Provision for Project 2000

4. The essential requirements for effective library and information services include:

a) Stock - this should include:

- * Overall subject coverage reflecting the needs of the Curriculum;
- * A variety of media, such as books, journals, reports, videotapes, tape-slides, CD ROMS, and Computer-Assisted-Learning (CAL) packages to support resource-based learning.
- * A full-range of information retrieval tools including printed indexes, online searching facilities and CD ROMS.
- * Access to inter-loan service to provide material not held locally.

It is recommended that at least £92 per FTE student should be spent on stock and services annually (excluding staff costs and capital expenditure). This represents the minimum necessary for the smallest nursing library to operate efficiently. There should be between 46 and 53 stock items per FTE student. In the first few years additional resources may have to be spent in order to bring the library up to the standard

expected of a higher education institution. Library resources will need to be maintained at this real standard to support curriculum development.

- b) Equipment - Resources will be needed for equipment to consult online databases, CD ROMS and to make use of other non-print media such as microfiche. In most cases a computer will be required to ensure the efficient undertaking of library routines such as the loan and return of materials, reservations and overdues.
- c) Staff - Library staff have an important contribution to make to the academic work of colleges. Professional librarians are responsible for identifying, assessing and providing the learning materials necessary to support the new courses and have an important teaching role in helping students acquire the necessary information handling and study skills to maximise the benefits they can gain from their courses.
- d) Space - Adequate space is essential if the library is to function effectively. It is unlikely that a library with the appropriate stock, staff, services and reader space can be provided in less than 500 square metres.
- e) Access - Students need access to library and information services on all sites where they are expected to undertake their studies. Opening hours need to take account of evening and weekend study as well as daytime work to meet the needs of students.

Further information on standards of provision will be found in The Library Association's Guidelines for College and Polytechnic libraries (2). The recommendations are based on the results of a survey into the actual levels of library and information service provision within colleges and polytechnics.

Achieving effective provision

5. Effective library and information provision is dependent on proper planning at a regional level and adequate resourcing at the institution level. Central planning is required to gain economies of scale and ensure that the right service is provided at whatever sites students may be located during their courses. Depending on the type of structure adopted to deliver Project 2000 courses, the Regional Librarian (in England), the librarian at the associated higher education institution or, where different, the librarian of the organisation contracted to provide the library and information service may undertake this planning role. Professional advice will also be required to draw up the specification for the library and information service, evaluate bids, and monitor performance. This would normally be done by the Regional Librarian.
6. At the institutional level, the librarian needs to be actively involved in course design and curriculum development. Only then can the most appropriate mix of learning resources and services be provided to support the courses and the ever increasing information demands and needs of students and academics. This remains equally true whether the library and information service is provided in-house, by an associated institution, or through a mixture of the two.
7. Higher education courses are validated. It is important that Project 2000 courses are subject to similar quality assurance testing if they are to be regarded as of similar standing to other higher education qualifications. In any such process the quality of library and information provision is a key component as it underpins the

whole learning process, and therefore should feature as an important part of any validating mechanisms.

Conclusion

8. In a period of rapid and radical change in nursing education it is crucial to provide the effective library and information services necessary to underpin these changes. A research-based profession with higher education standards needs to resource its library and information services at similar levels to other higher education institutions. We are concerned that there is already evidence of under-resourcing of these services and a lack of proper evaluation of quality and standards when considering bids to provide library and information services. It is the responsibility of validating and funding bodies groups to ensure that the quality of library and information services is considered when accrediting and resourcing Project 2000 courses. It is the responsibility of government to encourage proper resourcing of libraries by earmarking specific funds for library development, as they have done in the past for university bookfunds and books to support the National Curriculum in schools.

References

1. SHEPHERD, T. and YEOH, J. Resourcing Project 2000: the role of library and information services. Nursing Information Subgroup of The Library Association/Royal College of Nursing Library, 1990. ISBN 187 068 7876.
2. THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION. Guidelines for college and polytechnic libraries. 4th edition. The Library Association, 1990. ISBN 185 604 0070.

(Note - This is a draft statement. Although individuals may use the ideas contained in the document, it must not be described as the official view of The Library Association, or any other body. It is still the subject of consultation).

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