

Scottish Colleges of Nursing Librarians Conference

by Janice White

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The Ninth Annual conference for Librarians in Scottish Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery was held in May 1993 at the offices of the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland (NBS) in Edinburgh. This year's conference was chaired by Rebecca Higgins from the Highland Health Sciences Library in Inverness.

The librarians were pleased that the NBS confirmed its support for the annual conference, despite the fact that it no longer provides the funding for nurse education.

In addition to librarians from all of the Scottish Colleges, the conference was attended by some NBS Officers (Chief Executive, Board Secretary, Librarian, and a Professional Adviser) and the Chairman of the Association of Scottish Health Sciences Librarians. The Chief Executive made reference to the recent reconstitution of the NBS as an executive body and the consequent changes in membership and staffing structure of the board. She also referred to the current Scottish Office review of the management of nurse education (the results of which, after more than one postponement, are now expected to be known by December).

The morning session was concerned mainly with the perennial "domestic" matters of budgets, staffing and grading. Following the change in funding arrangements, the NBS no longer has any locus in these matters and could not, therefore, support the reconstitution of a steering group to consider these issues.

A telephone survey on budgeting, carried out by Mhairi McMillan from Ayrshire and Arran, produced wide-ranging results, with no two libraries operating in the same way overall. It was considered likely that national formulas would be phased out, with each library having to negotiate its own budget: this would have implications for the establishment and maintenance of national standards provision.

Once again, the problems of obtaining funding for service to trained staff were highlighted and various possibilities discussed - the best solution recognised as being the negotiation of contracts with Units and Trusts, despite the difficulties this involved.

Alison McIntosh, from Foresterhill, has also conducted a telephone survey - on staffing, especially with regard to extended hours and was pleased to note that the majority of libraries had increased their staffing over the last three years. Questions relating to change of shift patterns, employment of temporary staff, flexi-time and job share arrangements were also discussed. One major concern relating to extended hours was the question of security, especially where library staff worked alone in the evening.

A grading survey had been conducted by Marilyn Jeffery from Forth Valley. Only seven of the College librarians had been evaluated using the Hay system, and though the outcomes had generally been successful, the majority of regradings had taken over one year to achieve. (The "Hay System" is a means of preparing job descriptions and scoring them for the purpose of grading posts. It was developed by a firm of management consultants for the use of the NHS in Scotland.) Norman Sandeman, from Dundee, the

previous year's Chairman, acknowledged the support of the NBS in taking up the matter of grading with the Scottish Office, but there was general disappointment that the Management Executive still considered the Whitley A&C grades appropriate, with the Hay system available for regrading assessments. The difficulties in applying the Hay system to library posts were highlighted. It was agreed that, though some progress had been made, there was still disappointment at the non-availability of an appropriate grading structure for College librarians.

Jan Howden, from Glasgow, suggested that, as previous guidelines produced from the group were losing their currency, consideration should be given to the production of officially published standards. Informal discussions with the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) had already taken place and it was agreed that they should be formally approached to set up a working party consisting of librarians (within and without the NHS) and representatives from nurse education.

Reports were given of the progress of two Health Information Plans - for Lothian and Glasgow.

The morning session ended with an interesting description from Anne Brice, Borders, of an exercise in costing her library's services and drawing up contracts with users.

This set the scene for the afternoon session, led by a guest speaker, Mr Jim Swan, Lecturer at Genrothes College. His topic was costing and, starting from Drucker's definition of five areas of management, he gave an outline of the three areas of costing (labour; materials; overheads) and two key concepts in budgeting (planning and control). He then spoke about pricing and value for money before turning to the topic of income generation. Conference members were taken through the (fictional) example of costing the use of a library for a two day period, before considering the matter of contracts. The presentation stimulated discussion, where one matter raised was the question of whether libraries might expect to retain funds accrued by means of income generation.

As always, the librarians appreciated the support and interest of the NBS as well as the opportunity for librarians from all over Scotland to get together. Long may it continue!

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(adapted from the official report from the NBS)