

Project 2000 and libraries : a higher education view

Ian Winkworth, Newcastle Polytechnic Librarian

Liz Weeks, Avon College of Health

Ian Winkworth is Polytechnic Librarian at Newcastle Polytechnic and began by indicating that, as he knew very little about nursing librarianship, his address would be from the higher education viewpoint. Project 2000 courses are, however, higher education courses and therefore have to stand comparison. Expected standards and student education should be the same as in higher education.

The Project 2000 curriculum indicates:

- 1 – Students must be required to read widely
- 2 – Students, following on from this, must have the benefit of an HE library service
- 3 – Students need to be trained in information skills

All this puts high levels of demand on libraries and some libraries, quite understandably, are having difficulty. A survey in Norfolk showed that 86% of students used the library weekly or more, and 40% of students used the inter library loan system.

In Newcastle Polytechnic, a survey has been completed comparing Project 2000 students with those on existing health studies courses. The Project 2000 students have been found to be as active in their demand on the library, and their use of indexes and abstracts has been greater. Although Newcastle Polytechnic Library had superior resources and was within

one mile of base, Project 2000 students were using the base library more than the Polytechnic library which opposes the view in *Nursing Standard* (Vol 4(50) 5 September 1990) when a government spokesman said "It is a waste of money to have a duplication of resources. We would expect students to use the facilities of polytechnics or universities".

A further survey indicated that liaison between polytechnics and colleges ranged from total merger in some cases down to a means of academic validation and advice only; and the balance of financial input from Project 2000 courses into the college or polytechnic library was also wide ranging.

Unless lines are drawn and unless there is collaboration difficulties will arise and result in poorer student provision. Recently Baroness McFarlane spoke out in the House of Lords calling some schools of nursing "pathetic" with too few books, journals and staff.

Other evidence of current provision being inadequate can be found in the NIS report on resourcing Project 2000.

Multiple sites are not unique to Project 2000. For example, the franchising out of courses from polytechnics is becoming more prevalent and therefore the library provision for small groups is a general issue.

Ian Winkworth indicated that a HMI report cited in the Times Higher Educa-

tion Supplement stated that library facilities were inadequate in most HE establishments.

Ian then posed the questions "How big is the gap between how libraries are now and how they should be? And what are we doing about getting there?" He cited a survey done by Northern Region health service libraries which compared six colleges in the Northern Region. The ratio of students per librarian recommended by the LA is one librarian per 100 students. In the survey two colleges had one librarian to about 300 students and the lowest was one librarian to about 150 students. Some of the colleges had several sites (at least one had six sites) which is an uneconomic situation for higher education. The recommended book stock per student is 50 volumes. The best in this survey was 25, the worst 10. Ian emphasised the impossibilities of running a satisfactory service in a higher education library on this basis.

LA recommended spending per capita (excluding staff) is £92 (based on LA Guidelines for College and Polytechnic Librarians, 1990 plus an allowance for inflation). Newcastle Polytechnic spend £180. This emphasises how far many college libraries must improve to offer even an adequate service and how valuable surveys are in offering guidelines.

Ian, as an experienced campaigner, offered strategies for success:

- 1 Appoint a librarian who will be integrated into the academic management organisation.
- 2 Aim to double or even treble resource provision
- 3 Don't operate multiple sites unless with creative solutions

- 4 Never give up on liaison with the principal no matter how indifferent his attitude to libraries
- 5 Remember Project 2000 is remarkably like sandwich courses which are long established and if a single site library is not adequate then more sites and more money (as an aside Ian recognised the common librarians' complaint of multisitis!)
- 6 The librarian should have a clear perspective of the service based on standards and models in existence (eg LA and COFHE guidelines) and amend, if necessary. Don't reinvent the wheel
- 7 Ian recommended surveys as a means of raising library profile and gaining insight into users expectations and requirements. Support and pressure from students and staff can then be deflected to the principal – eg if there are not enough books for a particular course or groups. Ian emphasised that it can be constructive on occasions to go as far as withdrawing support to validation of a course if you as librarian feel the library is underfunded.
- 8 Make use of press coverage

Ian finished with encouraging words – "Project 2000 is a golden opportunity. There is a lot to be done, but this conference shows we can do it!"