SCONUL

2019-2022

STRATEGY

Contents

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About SCONUL

SCONUL is the professional association for academic and research libraries in the UK and Ireland. Our membership (sconul.ac.uk/members-and-representatives) includes all university and national libraries and many other research libraries in the UK, plus the research library community in Ireland.

The breadth of our membership makes SCONUL uniquely well placed to speak with a single voice on strategic issues for the sector. It enables us to provide a range of benefits to member libraries and their users, including the Access Scheme which allows users registered at one member library to use another, and the SCONUL statistics, which consists of a gold standard dataset and analytic tools allowing library services to benchmark themselves against their peers.

SCONUL also brings members together to share information and best practice, exploring challenges and opportunities for the sector. We commission research, produce briefings, host events and support our members in a range of other ways. This includes assisting the profession's current and future leaders through our deputies and directors groups; our mentoring scheme and other leadership tools.

The power and reach of SCONUL's work relies on commitment by the heads of our member library services and their senior leadership teams who give a great deal of time to our work through formal working groups and through contributions to projects, events and discussions. The SCONUL community is unstinting in its willingness to share intelligence, strategic insights and experience to meet the community's collective needs. This is, without doubt, our most valuable asset.

In summary, SCONUL is led by its members; driven by the needs of our members and informed by their priorities. We work collaboratively with partners across and beyond the sector to deliver the benefits of our work in the most efficient way possible.

The environment for libraries

We are at an exciting time for academic and research libraries. Libraries have stepped out beyond their traditional roles of providing access to resources, curating and preserving those resources and supporting their users, although these functions remain critical to every library's mission. The library is embedded much more deeply in the teaching, learning and research processes of modern institutions. For example, they are central to the developing open access infrastructure and often lead on research data management and related services. They are rightly acknowledged as a source of expertise in delivering student support and satisfaction - as a community libraries repeatedly come top of the NSS (https://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/nss-data-2008-2018). Institutions are making much more use of librarians' professional expertise beyond the library's traditional role to take in managing data, understanding knowledge sharing, supporting students and many other areas.

This changing landscape generates opportunities and challenges in equal measure, and the Board of SCONUL has identified six major areas of challenge which libraries say they will need to address over the term of this strategy.

Challenge 1: Budget constraints and the libraries' broader role

Libraries have argued successfully for funding from their institutions to be maintained over recent years - total library budgets have risen by 15% over the last five years[1]. However the cost base for libraries has risen much more steeply, particularly costs for content. In addition, libraries, like other parts of their institutions, are operating in a very uncertain policy and financial environment. Meanwhile, the range of professional and technical skills needed in the library is growing as they take on new areas of responsibility, making a broader contribution to the research and teaching functions of the institution.

Libraries have done a great deal to drive through efficiencies in their services, resulting in an overall reduction in library staffing over 11% over the last decade[2]. However, there is little scope for further incremental efficiencies at the current time without compromising core services. Libraries are considering how their services can be reconfigured to meet institutional requirements within budget. For some cases, this reconfiguration may need to be radical.

In planning the future of their services, librarians are keenly aware of the potential disruptive impact of external factors such as student numbers flows between institutions, the student profile within institutions; the potential impact of the Augur Review and forthcoming government spending review, and of course the impact of Brexit. They are also mindful of the opportunities that new technologies and services may offer and the need to remain equipped to respond in an agile way. This applies too to librarianship as a profession and how it may need to be rethought to meet new teaching and research roles, including influencing the pipeline of new talent, creating new roles, recruiting outside traditional routes and investing in the development of the current workforce.
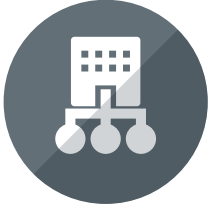
Challenge 2: Operating in a hybrid world

Libraries are required to operate and deliver in two worlds simultaneously – print and digital. As recently as five years ago, the death of the physical library was widely anticipated, but this was always far too simplistic. Students and researchers have a wide range of learning styles and needs and while digital is likely to become the default option, many will want to engage with physical materials, either from personal preference or because of research requirements. Libraries have valuable physical collections which they have a duty to preserve, and some disciplines actively require libraries to engage primarily with print either because print is intrinsic to their discipline or because a shift to digital has yet to happen.

Digital content also requires preservation and curation at the national or local level, and new ways must be found of providing access through digitisation to special collections and other valuable holdings. Developments in open access may mean more focus on the institutional repository and surfacing the materials it holds for teaching focused and research intensive institutions alike. The range of types of digital "objects" the library is supporting and preserving are also expanding and go far beyond research data.

Obviously delivering the library's core mission in this complex environment requires adequate funding and the range of specialist skills discussed above. However, it is important for those leading library services that they can explore and evidence long term trends in print and digital provision or resources in order to plan the development of their services and workforce and advocate for the support and resources they need.

1 SCONUL (2019) Annual Library Statistics 2016 -2017. SCONUL, London. Available online: https://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/2016-17-sconul-annual-library-statistics. Last accessed 26/04/2019

2 SCONUL (2019) Annual Library Statistics 2016 -2017. SCONUL, London. Available online: https://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/2016-17-sconul-annual-library-statistics. Last accessed 26/04/2019

Challenge 3: Developing the library infrastructure

Libraries have an outstanding track record of collaborating to deliver value for their users and their institutions. They have been quick to develop and adopt shared services as part of their drive for efficiency and delivering an excellent student experience - the all Wales Library Management System (http://whelf.ac.uk/sharedlms/) is a good example of this. Historically libraries have also been early adopters of new technologies and have been quick to rethink the way they work to take advantage of these. Continuing to make the most of these opportunities requires libraries to have some internal technical expertise or to be able to source (and pay for) that externally; it requires an investment of staff time, and sometimes financial resources; market horizon scanning; procurement expertise and a vision of how the demands on the institution may play into library development plans. Library leaders are required to make judgements about when to buy from the market or when to invest in collaboration; how the market might develop and how these issues interplay with the short and long-term needs of their institution.

Challenge 4: The cost of content: changing the model

Increases in the cost of journal subscriptions continue to far outstrip inflation, as do price rises for other kinds of content. The problems in these markets are well documented but hard to shift. The open access revolution, although given momentum by the development of Plan S, has succeeded in opening up access to research but not in limiting costs. Libraries remain creative in responding to those challenges, setting up library presses, driving forward open access in their institutions; using publicity in an attempt to expose publishers' behaviours and working very closely with Jisc Collections and other partners in negotiations. However, due to the effective monopoly position of publishers in an environment in which where you publish influences authors' promotion and reward, our impact has been necessarily limited.

The challenges for libraries on content are both local and national. Individually, they need to engage effectively with institutional leaders and academics to explain the complexities of content provision in a shifting open access environment; and to argue for the very significant resources required to meet the needs of their users. Most heads of service will have to face difficult decisions about resources in the near future. Collectively, libraries need to work in concert with national partners to inform and help shape the development of open access in the UK and beyond as the most effective way to control costs.

Challenge 5: Capitalising on new technologies

The next wave of technological change, whether it is called artificial intelligence, machine intelligence or Education 4.0, presents really exciting opportunities for libraries both to improve the student experience and to open up collections to research. Developments internationally in the library space suggest its use for new modes of discovery; to create bibliographic and other library data; for the development of personalised AI assistants to support students, and many others. Libraries need to consider how best to capitalise on these innovations. To what extent should libraries be looking to themselves to develop new technologies, either individually or collective, or to library partners such as Jisc and OCLC? To what extent can libraries shape and inform the market for AI products and which organisations might be our more effective partners in this space? Libraries will also need to understand and potentially to support AI driven changes in teaching and learning within the institution, including helping their users navigate this landscape.

Challenge 6: Leadership in complex environments

All of the issues described above show the central place of leadership in managing and meeting these challenges. There is no "business as usual" and no "down time". Instead library leaders are riding a wave of permanent revolution that requires resourcefulness, agility, stamina and vision.

Those leading libraries are also increasingly leading other services, such as student services or IT, and having to operate across a very broad bandwidth of issues. Engaging at the right level and with the right issues at the right time is a challenge for all our members. Library leaders also take very seriously their leadership role in relation to the workforce; for fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces; investing in the next generation of library leaders and ensuring their workforce has the skills and information needed to meet institutional needs.

Libraries have an outstanding track record of collaborating to deliver value for their users and their institutions.

How does SCONUL support members?

The challenges on members' time and focus are considerable and growing. SCONUL provides the community with an additional set of resources and capabilities which it can bring to bear on the challenges described earlier.

SCONUL delivers new services for members within our resource envelope and responds to immediate challenges or crisis on behalf of the sector.

Capability	How can this be used?	Recent examples:
Evidence	SCONUL commissions research, disseminate and collate information and work with partners to provide the evidence base that members need for decision making and advocacy.	• Research into perceptions of library leadership. • SCONUL Statistics and reporting tool. • Collating facts, figures and argument on the market for content and the need for open access.
Explore	SCONUL explores medium and long-term issues which are important to our members and share the process and findings with members in way that informs long-term planning.	• Commissioning research into the future of the academic library. • Bringing speakers on AI and other emerging areas to SCONUL conferences. • Holding Content Forum meetings to explore the market for e-books and Plan S.
Influence	SCONUL uses its skills and resources to engage with national stakeholders, whether that be Jisc; research funders; UUK; peer professional associations; commercial library providers or government, and to seek to influence their thinking, policies and activities.	• Responding to consultations on Wellcome's OA policy and on Plan S. • Acting as the library voice on external groups such as the UUK "no deal" Brexit planning group; Jisc Collections Content Strategy Group; Jisc Horizons Group. • Speaking on public platforms on content provision, library leadership etc.
Initiate	SCONUL brings our members together, and work with partners such as Jisc, to identify and drive forward new areas of work which members feel are needed.	• Pressing for the creation of the National Bibliographic Knowledge Base and the research data service. • Creating a toolkit for effective collaboration through meetings with the regional and national consortia. • Assessing the status of digital preservation of library resources with the aim of identifying omissions and areas of concern.
Deliver	SCONUL delivers new services for members within our resource envelope and responds to immediate challenges or crisis on behalf of the sector.	• Establishing the SCONUL Mentoring Scheme and leadership development resources. • Working with Tribal to reform their model for assessing library costs. • Raising poor performance with library suppliers.
Lead	The SCONUL Board has a critical role for the sector in identifying the strategic priorities for the membership, based on feedback; articulating the areas for action and leading the membership through those changes.	• Identifying ethnic diversity as a major challenge for the library sector and commissioning work in this area. • Commissioning and supporting a suite of work on library leadership and workforce development. • Developing the deputies groups and support for emerging and developing leaders in the profession.

How do we bring these capabilities to bear on our key challenges?

The capacity to deliver requires sufficient resources – both financial and staff. Currently SCONUL operates within tight financial resources and with a talented but small office. We rely heavily on engagement from our members to deliver and need to set clear and deliverable objectives within that framework. In considering priorities for 2019 – 2022, the Board has been very mindful to:

- focus our efforts where we can be most effective

- develop positive working relationships with the range of partners who can contribute to our vision

- capitalise on the capabilities described above

- be confident and ambitious in our objectives.

We are proposing the following programme of work:

Workstream 1: Cost of content

This remains the biggest area of spending for our members and the most complex strategic challenge facing the library sector. SCONUL has developed a high-profile presence with stakeholders and an effective voice in the debate about open access and journal negotiations. In particular SCONUL has communicated effectively the challenges that libraries face around individual negotiations, and the need for systemic change in the public interest.

We propose to continue, through the work of the Content Strategy Group, to advocate strongly for libraries' interests with senior stakeholders, to argue for change and to evidence the dangers of not doing so. We will produce more evidence and advocacy materials for members to support them in making the arguments within their own institutions. We will ensure the membership is engaged and well informed on new developments through regular communications and the work of the Content Forum.

Workstream 2: Organisational development

In responses to the membership survey and consultation meetings, it was clear that shaping and developing the workforce of the future is a priority for members. SCONUL has begun work looking at fostering diversity in the profession and will take this strands of work forward over the next three years. We also have work underway looking at the pipeline for new talent coming into the profession and at developing the current workforce. In striving to respond to revolutionary changes, we will work to support members in becoming more agile and to influence their institutions to do the same.

SCONUL will establish a new strategy group on organisational development to take forward this work. This group will also be responsible for considering the needs of the community in relation to developing leadership skills and capacities. It will also look at any developing training needs, based on a gap analysis of current provision. It will lead on advocacy with CILIP, library schools, Advance HE and other partners working in this area on behalf of the sector and will be responsible for producing evidence, research and advocacy in response to demand from members.

Shaping and developing the workforce of the future is a priority for members

Workstream 3: Technology and markets

Over the last three years, SCONUL has been working closely with Jisc, OCLC and other stakeholders to develop and articulate a shared understanding of the development of library infrastructure based on member needs, and to advocate for this in the public domain under the auspices of the Collaboration Strategy Group. This is an important function for the SCONUL community as it helps ensure that the projects and services being developed meet the needs of the library community. The group has also reflected on actual or potential market failures, and reviewed the performance of individual library providers.

We plan to take this work forward through a Technology and Markets Strategy Group. This refocused group will continue the work described above, with the addition of two key areas of activity – new technologies and digital preservation.

The group will have a role analysing and identifying barriers to the adoption of new technologies for libraries, for example in relation to artificial intelligence (AI). SCONUL has begun developing a plan for a two-year project exploring the road map to adoption of AI in libraries which this group will lead on.

Digital preservation is a responsibility shared broadly between institutions, private sector providers and public bodies, but an area where there is a lack of clarity and confidence over long-term planning. SCONUL has undertaken exploratory work in this area and we propose carrying out a project to scan the current arrangements and identify areas of weakness and further action. Again, this group will lead on this work.

Workstream 4: Trends and futures

As discussed above, understanding how a range of factors will influence the development of library services is critical to effective leadership and we plan to give a clearer focus to this element of our work with the establishment of a new Trends and Future Strategy Group looking specifically at long term trends for teaching and learning and research, and their implications for libraries. A major focus of this group's work will be to support members in considering new models for service provision and identifying and developing resources for members to help them plan effectively for their future.

One of the key deliverables for this group will be a member driven and member owned two year project on library futures, allowing existing and emerging leaders to define and consider these questions. This will include a Service Development Forum, bringing members together to consider critical questions facing the sector. The work of the other three strategy groups will inform the work of this fourth group, but they will also commission research and initiate projects. For example, SCONUL has already commissioned work looking at the drivers for increasing use of the library as a physical space, and this group will take that work forward.

Services and resources for members

We deliver a set of services for SCONUL members which are widely used by member institutions.

These are a unique resource and have an important role in ensuring efficiency in the sector.

SCONUL statistics

Service	Description	Development
SCONUL statistics	Allows members to benchmark their service against peers, and provides a detailed picture of library activity across the UK and Ireland. These are a unique resource and have an important role in ensuring efficiency in the sector. The reporting tool, available via the SCONUL website, allows members to run tailored reports and produce graphs comparing their own institution's performance to individual or groups of peer institutions.	• We plan to maintain the service indefinitely, regularly reviewing the data and adding new measures where required, and removing those no longer relevant.
Access Scheme	An important enabler for students and researchers at UK universities to pursue their studies and research objectives. In essence it allows users of one member institution to use the libraries of another. 174 libraries were part of the scheme in 2018, welcoming over 40,000 users. They loaned at least 96,000 unique items to staff, research students, post-graduates, part-time students and distance learning students.	• We will maintain this core service, ensuring that the spirit of the scheme is followed and that the rules are amended as required to take account of developments in the sector.
Virtual Enquiry Service	For the last three years, SCONUL has provided members with the opportunity to join the SCONUL virtual out-of-hours enquiry service, based on the OCLC QuestionPoint service. This provides cover when the library is not staffed, allowing libraries to ensure that their users can have access to an enquiry service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.	• We are currently reviewing the service to confirm that a) members still require access to a virtual enquiry service and b) OCLC remains the right partner.
Information sharing	We facilitate information sharing between members in a variety of ways, including through our monthly newsletter and our triannual practitioner journal, SCONUL Focus. We also use our mailing lists and the SCONUL website to distribute information about sector developments to members. We produce briefing for members on key issues for academic libraries, for example a suite of publications on leadership.	• We will continue to use our monthly newsletter, SCONUL Focus and newsflashes to share information with the sector. • We will explore with members the appetite for new modes of publication focusing on relevant issues in more depth.

Service	Description	Development
Supporting member consortia	Since 2013 we have been providing support for other library consortia whose members are also members of SCONUL. This support is provided at cost with partners formally constituted as SCONUL sub-groups and allows them to concentrate on projects, research and services for their members while SCONUL takes on some of their administrative burden. Currently we have these relationships with the Northern Collaboration consortium, the Mercian Collaboration and North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL). More recently we have begun supporting two skills-focused bodies: The Relationships Management Group and the Customer Services Group UK.	• SCONUL is committed to supporting our members through our support for these groups and will actively consider requests from other partners for this kind of support.
SCONUL website	Our website provides access to SCONUL publication, news, events and some services such as the Access Scheme and statistics.	• We want to develop the site as a useful repository for library content. The communities of interest discussed below will also have a role identifying and sharing resources via the website. • We want to make the website easier to browse and work is underway to change the structure to facilitate this.
Leadership and development resources and services	SCONUL has a suite of leadership services and resources aimed at emerging, development, newly appointed and experience leaders which are available via the website. This includes informal groups for deputies, heads of service, portfolio leaders and those running converged services.	• These groups are an important resource for members and we plan to continue to support these. • The Organisational Development Strategy Group will be responsible for assessing and developing broader leadership support initiatives.
SCONUL Mentoring Scheme	The mentoring scheme has been running for around a year and shows every indication of being successful in supporting newly appointed and emerging leaders.	• We will continue to support and develop the scheme, actively seeking mentors and mentees. It will be formally reviewed at regular intervals.
Events	SCONUL holds three events a year on average, including the residential Summer Conference, Content Forum meetings, seminars on individual themes and the Library Design Awards event.	• SCONUL plans to maintain this level of activity, linking the events programme to this strategy and the work of the Strategy Groups.

How SCONUL will work

We must be clear that we are delivering value for members, through effective coordination, collaboration and partnership. SCONUL will extend the amount of outreach and engagement work we do with partners to actively explore possible partnerships and shared projects. We will not duplicate the work of others and will work closely with other library focused organisations to ensure that the needs of our members are met in an efficient and coordinated way without duplicating effort or work.

Partnership - International engagement

We will seek a more international focus over the course of this strategy. The challenges outlined above are not unique to the UK and Irish context, and we will actively explore potential partnerships with peer organisations in other countries, and to actively share learning and resources between countries.
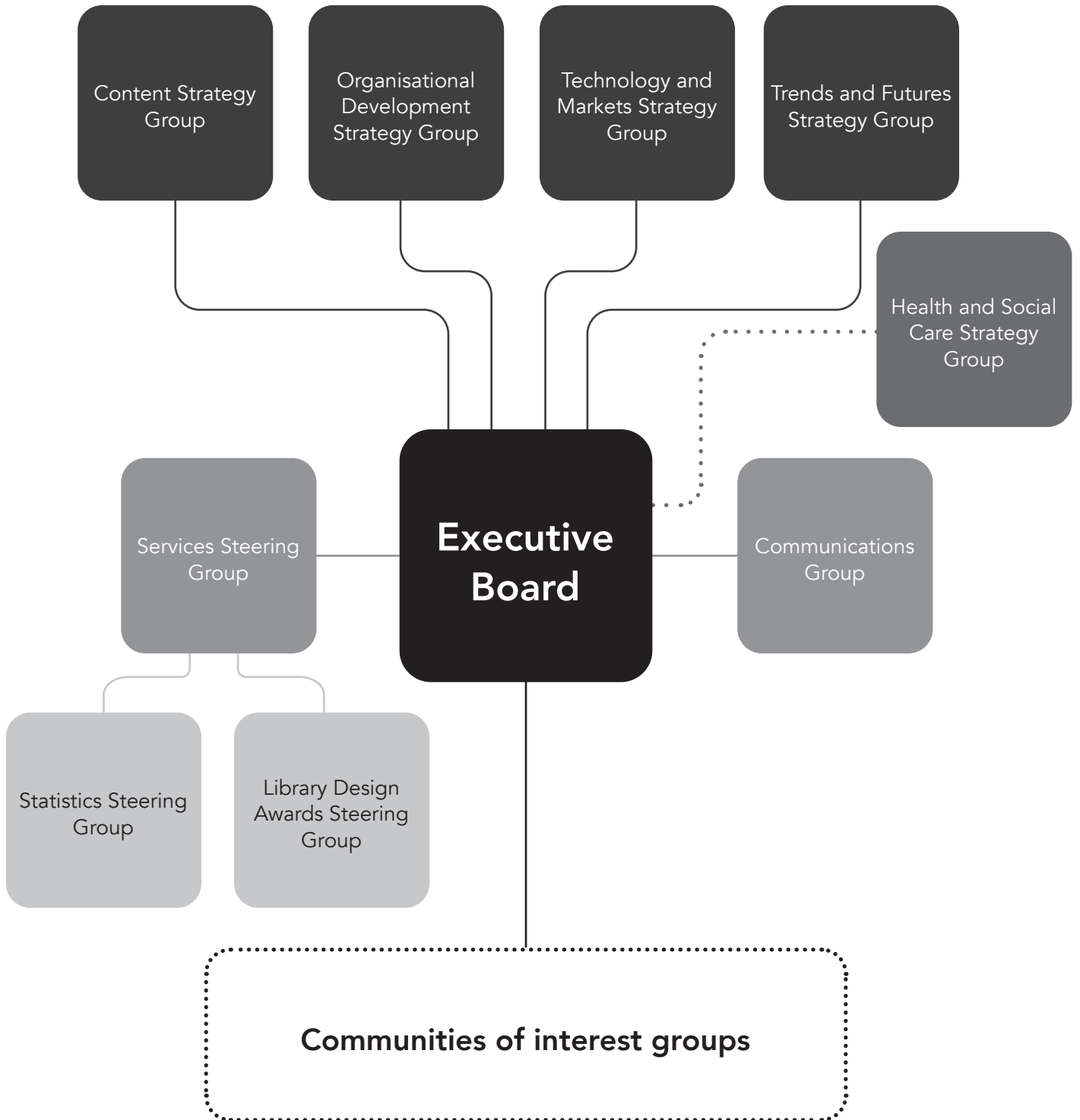
Partnership - Across professional boundaries

SCONUL has always fostered close working relationships with peer organisations working in other areas of professional service and in other library arenas. We will increase our levels of engagement here too, actively seeking projects and areas of work where collaborative working benefits the community.

Partnership - with members

SCONUL is reliant on the expertise and commitment of members to deliver all of the projects and activities identified above. We will actively seek heads of service to lead the strategy groups and to stand for election to the Board. We also want to engage more deeply with the senior leadership teams within member libraries, both to support their leadership development and also to draw, for the benefit of the wider community on their specialist expertise. We will set up a number of virtual community interest groups to fostering information sharing; to input content to the SCONUL website and to engage with the Strategy Groups.

We must be clear that we are delivering value for members, through effective coordination, collaboration and partnership.

SCONUL's organisation and structure will be as follows:

Content Strategy Group

Organisational Development Strategy Group

Technology and Markets Strategy Group

Trends and Futures Strategy Group

Health and Social Care Strategy Group

Services Steering Group

Executive Board

Communications Group

Statistics Steering Group

Library Design Awards Steering Group

Communities of interest groups

SCONUL Board

The SCONUL Board will take a more active role in engagement and communications as part of its leadership function for the community including through other national and regional consortia.

Communications

An important focus for the new strategy is increasing the flow of information to and from our members, with this being a specific focus for the strategy groups and Services Steering Group. They will continue to be supported by a focused Communications Group responsible for advising, assessing and initiating communications with members. We see a role for the communities of interest groups in supporting the sharing of information across the membership.

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The 2019 – 2022 strategy in summary

Workstream	Deliverables	Which challenges does it meet?	Which SCONUL capabilities does it draw on
Cost of content	A voice for SCONUL members in the debate. Responses to policy consultations. Effective partnerships with funders, UUK, Jisc Collections and others. Evidence and advocacy materials for members. Content Forum meetings to allow members to explore and debate issues.	**Challenge 1:** Budget constraints and the libraries' broader role **Challenge 2:** Operating in a hybrid world **Challenge 4:** The cost of content: changing the model **Challenge 6:** Leadership in complex environments	Evidence Explore Influence Lead
Organisational development	Research on fostering ethnic diversity in the profession and associated support the guidance for members. Research on the pipeline for new talent coming into the profession and on developing the current workforce and associated evidence and advocacy materials. Making the academic and research libraries voice heard as an employer with CILIP, library schools, Advance HE and other partners. Conference on workforce development Reviewing leadership provision for SCONUL members. Reviewing any gaps in training needs for member staff.	**Challenge 1:** Budget constraints and the libraries' broader role **Challenge 2:** Operating in a hybrid world **Challenge 5:** Capitalising on new technologies **Challenge 6:** Leadership in complex environments	Evidence Explore Influence Initiate Deliver Lead
Technology and markets	Setting out clearly for Jisc and other stakeholders the needs and requirements of members in relation to new technologies. Identifying and responding to actual and potential library services market failures. Survey work on digital preservation to identify areas of failure or uncertainty, with a view to identifying areas of action. Roadmap for the sector on the uptake of new AI technology for libraries, including identifying barriers and how these might be removed.	**Challenge 1:** Budget constraints and the libraries' broader role **Challenge 2:** Operating in a hybrid world **Challenge 3:** Developing the library infrastructure **Challenge 5:** Capitalising on new technologies	Evidence Explore Influence Initiate Deliver Lead

Workstream	Deliverables	Which challenges does it meet?	Which SCONUL capabilities does it draw on
Trends and futures	Member owned and member driven project exploring the long term trends impacting on member libraries. Research into the drivers for the trend towards increasing use of the library as a physical space. Conference and other events on library futures including through a new Service Development Forum. Resources and advocacy materials on long terms trends to assist members service development planning.	**Challenge 2:** Operating in a hybrid world **Challenge 3:** Developing the library infrastructure **Challenge 5:** Capitalising on new technologies **Challenge 6:** Leadership in complex environments	Evidence Explore Initiate Lead
Services	SCONUL will continue to provide the following services: • SCONUL statistics • Access Scheme • Virtual Enquiry Service • Information sharing • Supporting member consortia • SCONUL website • Leadership and development resources and services • SCONUL Mentoring Scheme • Events. We are open to developing further services identified as helpful by members.	**Challenge 1:** Budget constraints and the libraries' broader role	Evidence Initiate Deliver
Communications	SCONUL will focus more strongly on information sharing and effective communications within and beyond the SCONUL community.	**Challenge 1:** Budget constraints and the libraries' broader role **Challenge 6:** Leadership in complex environments	Evidence Influence Deliver
How we will work	SCONUL will work in the following ways: • through partnership with peers and stakeholders • with a focus on international engagement • across professional boundaries • with the active engagement of the SCONUL Board • and in partnership with members, including the development of communities of interest groups aimed at senior leadership teams.	**Challenge 6:** Leadership in complex environments	Influence Initiate Deliver Lead

SCONUL