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## Breakout session two: summary of delegates' discussions

*What practical actions are needed to facilitate national and/or regional planning for LIS research, its dissemination and its take up by practitioners?*

Discussions identified common concerns: multiple research agendas; the pre-requisites and culture for LIS research, major omissions in the current research landscape; examples of good practice and good models for a future UK LIS research structure.

The number of different agendas, given the significant number of stakeholders involved is perceived as a barrier to the determination of a coherent LIS research agenda.

There are pre-requisites, particularly of the skills and experience of the LIS community, that are needed before LIS research activity can be truly considered to be of an international standard.

Despite adopting the mantle of a reflective profession, the underlying culture is operational and does not always embrace investigative and explorative activity in order to produce solutions.

Some major omissions in the research landscape include the lack of direction in the determination of a research agenda, no single locus of activity to provide access to a LIS research landscape and no organisation or body to assume responsibility for the co-ordination of the existing environment.

Examples of good practice abound and vary from networking opportunities as promoted by JISC 'Town' meetings to the virtual democracy of organisations such as Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) and the Museums Libraries and Archives Council.

Existing organisational models may provide options for consideration when progressing the above issues. Any model adopted must allow for the considerable number of stakeholder and partnership interests that influence and inform LIS research.

### Practical actions needed

#### 1: Planning

*The problem: Strategic chaos.*

There is a need to present a more easily understood agenda for LIS research. If this were in place, other essential elements such as access to sources of funding could be developed. LIS-related research strategies emerge from a variety of organisations that may be LIS focussed; LIS influenced or LIS peripheral. Fragmentation is losing people, particularly practitioners and no-one has a 'handle' on the multi-agenda'd chaos, the multi-agency involvement and the multi-faceted knowledge base required to address the issues that need attention (*see Workshop one*).

*The solution: Strategic action*

The LIS profession needs to develop a sustainable structure for the organisation, co-ordination and capacity building for research activity. The organisation could be virtual or physical; it will need to encompass the significant number of stakeholders and to build on the models of partnership working that already exist in this landscape.

The strategic planning of LIS research must be longitudinal, global in aspiration and context driven.

It must lead to the development of robust quality guidelines.

The planning should include skills development, debate and discussion, stakeholder analysis.

Any such structure should support assisting the LIS community in determining what individuals and organisations can best contribute and provide access to information that will guide them in locating the resources they require to do so.

**2: Dissemination**

*The problem: Everyone knows some thing, no-one knows everything, everyone knows something needs to be done.*

Despite the many networks that exist to promote information exchange in the profession there is no simple route of access for those who wish to use research to address service issues and avoid duplication in solving problems. There is no organisation that assumes responsibility for ensuring that the community has the capacity to know about and organise, share and promote LIS research information whether it is data or knowledge.

*The solution: an LIS research information environment.*

The LIS research community should initiate a locus for information and knowledge transfer to provide access for those with significant or partial involvement and interest.

**3: Take-up**

*The problem: What research is done is insufficiently applied in practice.*

Practitioners need more skills, experience and competency in undertaking research and more confidence in using research outputs. Doing and using research provides more information that can be re-invested and thus grow the body of professional knowledge and practice.

*The solution: Nurture a research culture.*

Critical partnerships are needed to encourage knowledge transfer. These can be at a local regional, national or international level.

Employers need to be more actively involved and encouraged to support practitioners to trust research in order to apply findings into the workplace.

More emphasis is needed on creating a culture of professional practice that is truly reflective and accommodates work that is not 'invented here'.

UK LIS research should aspire to contribute to the global 'big picture' not just in blue skies, academic research, but also in practice based, evidence led research and investigation.

**Good practice identified**

The culture for the development of research agendas should use devices such as the JISC 'Town' meetings that promote knowledge transfer and where calls for research positively encourage collaborative working.

The roles of existing organisations should be acknowledged as strengths and capitalised on. For example, CILIP for practitioners; AHRC for academic research; JISC for FE/HE research and learning; BL for co-operation and partnerships.

The Observatory model lends itself to the organisation of research activity and outcomes.

The EU 'Networks of excellence' are models for encouraging and promoting ideas. A web based presence would be efficient at providing information without undue administrative burdens.

Good local solutions exist such as the Sheffield University/Derbyshire Libraries Service alliance.

The JISC Strategic e-Content Alliance.

Available at:

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/themes/eresources/sea.aspx#downloads>

The Danish National Library School offers a model of national co-ordination for research activity.

**Models offered for consideration**

All three actions require a real or a virtual model for the organisation, co-ordination and implementation of strategic LIS research. Such a structure would also enable access to the information by the LIS profession. This in turn will engender more confidence that any research activity associated with their profession is available in an understandable and useable way.

Group 1 suggested a coalition approach based on experience of the CNI.

*The structure* to comprise existing partners rather than inventing yet another. The coalition

would be of relevant partners and stakeholders. Authority would come from its membership. Action is required to identify partners, collaborators, and organisations that should be represented. The structure must be permeable to members.

*The scope* of the coalition would be to define content, scope, research boundaries and gaps.

*The roles of the coalition would include:*

- Information exchange
- Promotion of best practice
- Setting of quality guidelines
- Act as an ideas forum
- Be a partner finding/dating agency
- Promotion of the development of skills and competencies
- Influencing employers
- Supporting professional doctorates by professional practice
- Recognising and valuing different types of research
- Horizon scanning
- Processes to be out in place for continuity and sustainability.

*Key outputs*

- A manifesto setting out aspirations, objectives which should demonstrate links between existing research strategic and government agendas but also set out its own agenda
- A roadmap to show how it will achieve its objectives
- The 'Cream of Information Science' showcase of best practice and the facilitation of existing research information exchange
- The coalition should have global relevance (Europe, US etc) but recognise significant UK contribution.

Group 2 provided a Venn diagram outlining the essential functions and responsibilities that lie within a mature research environment. These included the main communities of researchers, practitioners and funders and showed, at the centre a Champion, responsible for co-ordinating all the necessary activity. The model emphasised inter-connectivity, provided for the option of it being virtual as well as physical, acknowledged the shared responsibilities of roles and activities.

Group 3 discussed a range of current good practice models that could be integrated to good effect in determining the future structure for the required aspects of LIS research planning, funding and promotion. In discussions about the nature of the body that could bring about the required changes and develop an LIS research agenda, the group considered the potential for (for example) The British Library to be the sponsor of an initiative. They concluded that it was important for any new body to link to the bigger picture. Whilst it was considered important to bring the many stakeholders and partners together, it had to be acknowledged that such a body should have the authority to act independently, to set appropriate boundaries and not be constrained by any pre-existing organisational objectives.

Group 4 offered the Bertelsmann model adopted in Germany to determine a model of public library cooperation on an international scale. <[www.stiftung.bertelsmann.de](http://www.stiftung.bertelsmann.de)> [viewed on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2007. English version available. Search tip Education/Libraries/Library 2007]

OR

[http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bst/en/media/xcms\\_bst\\_dms\\_15629\\_15630\\_2.pdf](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/bst/en/media/xcms_bst_dms_15629_15630_2.pdf) [viewed February 14<sup>th</sup> 2007]

### End note

These sessions provoked a real debate and were all excellent illustrations of the very real threat to a future for LIS research. They also reinforced the enthusiasm, knowledge experience and aspirations that will ensure a future for world class, UK based LIS research. As one group succinctly put it, the future of LIS research depends on activity that will:-

- Bring them together
- Help them grow
- Get better at knowledge transfer
- Connect to the Big Picture.