

**Exploring the Value of Reading Lists to Academic Communities:
an analysis of potential and perceived value
to partners in reading list provision**

by

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A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Science degree of Loughborough University.

February 2006

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Abstract

This research investigated the evolving value of recommended reading lists to academic libraries and the communities that they serve. It examined the possibility of extending Library use of reading lists through new information extracted from associating online reading list data with Library circulation data in a Reading List Collection Use database. Potential information that can be generated on the utility of Library provision for targeted sectors of the Library's taught-course market was identified. Possible collection management and academic support uses were suggested for such information generated from data already held on university computer systems. Factors that influence the use of materials on reading lists were further explored. Recognising that availability of recommended reading system data is wholly dependent on lecturer participation in online reading list provision, research was conducted on the perceived value of the Library/lecturer partnership for this purpose. Focus groups were conducted exploring the use and barriers to use of reading lists in the community. Analysis of focus group data indicated some lecturer perception that the Library/lecturer partnership for online reading list provision was imbalanced to favour Library objectives at lecturer expense. Problems of information and communication shortfalls were identified, and suggestions made for possible Library approaches in overcoming barriers to cooperative reading list provision and use.

Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks to all those who supported and assisted me in this research,

to Mary Morley, who consented to having the study at Pilkington Library, and graciously extended the use of Systems Team time and effort to assist;

to Gary Brewerton and Jon Knight, who tirelessly answered questions and translated the database design into a populated, working database;

to the Lecturers and Academic Librarians who willingly participated in the focus groups and provided far more data than had ever been anticipated;

to all of the Library staff, who were constant in their encouragement and support, especially Sue Manuel and Ruth Stubbings, who provided unfailing moral and practical assistance throughout the project;

and

to my supervisor, Adrienne Muir, who repeatedly pushed me in out of my depth, while calmly offering advice on keeping my head above the water.

The shortcomings in this work are all mine – but I'm sure they were reduced considerably by your kind support. Thank you.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Role of Reading Lists in Academic Communities

Lists of recommended reading produced by academics for teaching purposes are valued for different purposes. They are lecturer teaching resources, student learning resources, and, for academic librarians, resource selection tools. Use of reading lists as resources and as tools, is changing in online information environments (Parker 2004). Online resources can be accessed directly from reading lists or links to library catalogues checked immediately for availability of hard copy resources. This move toward computerised Library Management Systems (LMS), Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) and online access to information resources means a great deal of reading list data is now held on university computer systems. Increased reading list access should facilitate information sharing between libraries and lecturers, and may allow extending library use of reading lists as collection management tools.

Traditionally, library use of academics' lists of recommended reading has been limited. The lists primarily serve as selection tools for acquiring resources that have been identified as needed – and therefore, presumably, wanted – by the students who comprise academic libraries largest customer base. Lists are increasingly important library selection tools in view of the shift in higher education environments toward resource based learning, as resource based learning depends on provision of appropriate resources (Edwards, Day & Walton 1998, p.73). But there is often, it has been observed, “tension between the role of the list as a tool and as a resource” (Secker 2004, p.41). Library need for early list acquisition to facilitate timely resource provision does not always fit well with academic work schedules. Librarians have been obliged to chase academics, with only limited success, for reading list submissions (Smith 1993) (Stopforth 1994) (Yeadon and Cooper 1995) (Mendelsohn 1996). Difficulty in obtaining reading lists can hamper academic librarian efforts to support recommended reading provision – and limit reading list potential as a library tool for generating management information on taught-course resources.

Electronic information and information technology offer new possibilities for library reading list use. Available data held in online reading list systems could be electronically associated in a database with circulation data from Library Management Systems to examine the demonstrated use of recommended resources. Manipulation of the data could allow examination of the utility of a collection in delivering resource support for any identifiable segment of course curricula. While circulation data may not reflect reference use of library materials, it could provide quantifiable evidence of recommended resource uptake. Such information could have value for academic liaison as well as collection management use.

Potential benefits of extending library use of reading lists as collection management tools warrants closer investigation.

1.2 Research Subject

This research on academic reading list use is based on the use of reading lists at Loughborough University. Loughborough, located in Leicestershire, is one of the new British universities created in the 1960s. It is served by Pilkington Library with a book stock approaching three quarters of a million volumes. Access to about 6,000 electronic journals and 200 electronic databases is provided by the Library and facilitated by MetaLib, a federated search tool, and SFX (context-sensitive reference linking). Loughborough lecturers are requested to provide reading lists to the University community via LORLS (Loughborough Online Reading List System). In 2005, when the research was conducted, the Loughborough student body consisted of over 14,000 full time equivalent students.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

This research aimed to investigate the role of reading lists in academic communities and their usefulness as management tools for predicting, monitoring and influencing use of library stock.

Objectives

- Review developments and issues in measuring use of library materials.
- Examine use of reading list material and compare use across academic disciplines.
- Identify and explore factors that influence use of material on reading lists, including
 - nature of lists
 - discipline
 - academics' views of list purpose, use and promotion
 - timely provision of lists to academic librarians.
- Investigate librarian views of value of reading lists as collection management tools and factors affecting that value.
- Identify what the Library can do, if appropriate, to overcome barriers to profitable use of lecturer reading lists in meeting organisational goals.

Chapter 2

The Literature Review

2.1 Scope of reviewed literature

The literature on reading list use in academic communities is limited. The issues involved, however, are independently explored in other areas of library literature. Developments documented in the literatures of circulation research, resource selection, library-faculty relationships and electronic information have all contributed to the evolution of the role of the reading list in academic communities. No attempt is made to review the entirety of the literature in these areas. However relevant selections identified from over forty years of academic library development have been covered.

2.2 Circulation Studies

Application of information gained from circulation studies to management of academic libraries has been viewed with suspicion. Research into the circulation of materials had been conducted from the 1960s in attempts to measure the use made of these library collections. Originally, such studies were aimed at finding methods of managing the problems of exponentially expanding collections of well-funded university libraries. As budget restrictions became more of a factor, however, fears that the findings of circulation studies would be used to reduce library budgets still further made their conduct controversial.

2.2.1 Measuring Material Use

The earliest circulation studies recorded in library literature were concerned with identifying peripheral works that could be relegated to remote storage without overly inconveniencing readers or staff. Main collection shelf space was urgently needed to accommodate acquisition of new materials. Some method of selecting less-needed material for relegation was needed. Fussler and Simon's (1969) pioneering material use study found that:

The recorded circulation use of books is a reasonably reliable index of *all* use, including the unrecorded, consultative, or browsing use within the library (Fussler & Simon 1969, p.3);

which supported the case for use of circulation statistics in library stock control. Trueswell (1969) applied techniques used in managing business inventories to analyse the distribution of borrowed library stock. This demonstrated that library book circulation supported the business model of 80% of transactions being generated by 20% of items stocked. Although Trueswell's research was intended to generate management information for dealing with problems of ever-expanding collections, his 80/20 article is more often cited as one of the first published warnings that library collections are largely underused.

2.2.2 The Pittsburgh Study

If Trueswell's article sounded a warning, the University of Pittsburgh Study (Kent *et al.* 1979) built a solid case that university research libraries invested large sums of money acquiring and maintaining resources that were rarely, or never, used. This landmark study took advantage of the data collection capabilities of an automated circulation system to record book acquisitions and transactions of the University's Hillman Library from October 1968 through December 1975. The objective of the research was to develop measures for determining the extent of use specific library materials received and the full cost of that use for the library. Asymptotic regression analysis, a standard statistical technique, was used on the data to develop a mathematical model to predict future use of material based on actual use during its first year in the collection (Kent *et al.* 1979, p.1-12).

The study found that nearly 40% of some 37,000 books added to the Hillman collection in 1969 did not circulate even once during their first seven years on the shelves. The spectre of over-resourced, under-used libraries tying up unreasonable amounts of host organisations' funds had become a statistically documented reality.

2.2.3 Reaction to the Pittsburgh Study

Reaction to the Pittsburgh study was immediate and highly critical. Jasper G. Schad, Library Director of the State University of Kansas at Wichita, stated, "the study is based on incorrect assumptions and incomplete data that lead to meaningless conclusions" (Schad 1979, p.60). His arguments were based on his own interpretation of the published report data, but marred by misinterpretation of the data parameters of the study. Kent (1979) rebutted the factual errors in Schad's arguments, yet the Schad article continued to be cited as evidence refuting the Pittsburgh findings.

Professor Thomas J. Galvin, Dean of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Library and Information Science, verified and defended the correctness of the Pittsburgh Study's methods and results, but many other Pittsburgh faculty members – academic as well as library – disagreed. The entire body of Faculty Library Representatives approved and published a reply to the Kent Study that characterised it as "a highly subjective and political document" that "makes no attempt to quantify the benefits derived from library expenditure" (Borkowski & MacLeod 1979, p.63).

Circulation as an inadequate measure of library research use was a recurring theme in objections to the Pittsburgh Study. Voigt (1979) argued circulation studies primarily represent undergraduate and taught postgraduate use of library materials. Massman (1979) insisted circulation figures should not be acted on without further research into the reasons for use or non-use of library materials. Leslie (1981) proposed comparison of citation analyses for university scholarly publications against library holdings as evidence of research use. Even Trueswell (1979), who had first demonstrated the 80/20 rule application to

libraries, recommended restricting circulation based management measures to defined taught-course collections. Hayes (1981) reinforced the weight of objections by re-analysing the Pittsburgh data using a mixture of Poisson distributions – an analysis model that does not assume the use of an item increases the likelihood of future use – to produce statistical evidence that circulation data are not an adequate index to *all* use of library materials.

2.3 Acceptable Applications of Circulation Analysis

Concerns that recorded circulation data did not measure research use led researchers to explore what it could measure and how circulation analysis might be used to inform collection management.

2.3.1 Replications

Some effort was made to reproduce the Pittsburgh Study at different institutions. Hardesty (1981 & 1988) conducted similar studies at two small liberal arts colleges to measure undergraduate library use. Both studies produced results very similar to those of the Pittsburgh Study. In each, “a relatively small number of books received considerable recorded circulation and a relatively large number of books received little or no circulation” (Hardesty 1988, p.64). Despite the needs of undergraduates being more limited and predictable than those of researchers, the libraries serving these institutions still acquired a large proportion of subsequently unused material.

Hardesty questioned whether selection criteria at the undergraduate institutions differed greatly from those of the research universities. He had already concluded in an earlier study that, “most classroom faculty do not have well-defined and measurable attitudes regarding what types of library materials are appropriate for undergraduate student use” (Hardesty 1986, p.22). He further cited Farber’s concept of “the university-library syndrome” whereby classroom faculty “view the college library’s relationship to their teaching much as they view their university library’s relationship to their graduate studies”, and select books appropriate to the latter (Farber 1974, p.52 as cited by Hardesty 1988, p.78). Similar selection methods, he reasoned, could account for the similarity of usage patterns between collections serving essentially dissimilar communities.

Upon comparing book usage studied at DePauw by acquisition method, Hardesty found that a very high percentage of donated books never circulated. Librarians and lecturers selected about equal amounts of entirely unused material. Librarians, however, selected a higher than expected proportion of heavily and moderately used books and a lower than expected proportion of those with light use than did lecturers (Hardesty 1981, p.274-275). Results of the applied chi-square test at 35.19 indicated a significant difference between selectors in these areas. Hardesty’s examination of the titles involved suggested to him that

librarians selected fewer graduate level books in narrow specialities, but this was not quantified in his account.

2.3.2 Performance Indicators

Progressively limited financial resources have continually increased pressures on university librarians to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of library performance in meeting mission objectives. From the 1980s, instances of research into material use in search of possible performance indicators for future acquisitions occur regularly in library literature.

An exploratory study trying to establish criteria for prediction of future levels of use for works considered for acquisition was carried out jointly between the City of London Polytechnic (CLP) and the then Loughborough University of Technology (LUT) (Hart *et al.* 1986). A sample of books acquired in 1980 for faculty departments corresponding to Mathematics/Computer studies or Social Studies was selected from each university library and coded according to an agreed set of variables. Circulation of each sample item was subsequently recorded for its first two years of availability. To obtain a homogenous set, sample works were restricted to single copy items in English, published between 1976-1980, and held in the main collection (i.e. excluding short-loan or reference items). Nine variables, one of which was 'inclusion on reading lists', were studied.

While the study was limited by the very restricted nature of the sample to a closely defined subset of acquisitions in two very different organisations, some interesting results were noted. Level of non-use at both institutions was high in the Social Sciences at 32% for LUT and 31% for CLP. Non-use was even higher in the Mathematics/Computing samples for CLP at 47 % rising to 49% for Computing books considered as a separate subject. Loughborough, however, recorded a much lower 9% non-use in Mathematics/Computing, falling to 3% for Computing books alone (Hart *et al.* 1986, p.48). Conversely, books on reading lists at CLP were used more heavily than expected, but reading list inclusion was found to have no significance for student use of the books studied at LUT (Hart *et al.* 1986, p.47).

Conclusions cannot be reliably drawn from such a limited study about a possible inverse relationship between use of recommended reading by students and their wider reading behaviour, but the possibility begs examination. More important, for the research conducted in this current study, is the question of the value of management information drawn from reading list data if students discount reading list recommendations.

2.3.3 Practical Applications

The value of circulation studies are realised when translated into policies that improve the cost-effectiveness of the collection in meeting mission objectives. Peasgood (1986) describes the effects of establishing a book acquisition policy based upon analysis of current

borrowing. In response to discovery of marked differences in circulation by subject, budget allocations were rebalanced yearly by increasing funds to the highest demand subjects at the expense of those demonstrating the lowest demand. This demand-led policy, which overrode the more traditional population-related policy, resulted in progressively higher take-up of the new books added to stock each year.

Payne and Willers questioned the practical value of management information generated by occasional circulation studies. They reported that no direct action had been taken on the two studies (Hart *et al.* 1986 & Payne 1986) undertaken at City of London Polytechnic libraries (Payne & Willers 1989, p.29). Failure to identify either who needed the information or how it could be used was put forward as reasons for these studies' lack of impact. They concluded that, "unless there is a genuine need for, and appreciation of, the information produced, then such information may not be utilized" (Payne & Willers 1989, p.33). They particularly noted that failure to differentiate types of information required at different hierarchical levels could mitigate against effective use of management information. Finally, they noted that even accurately identified and targeted information was of little practical use in collection management unless provided on a regular basis.

Day and Reville (1995) aimed to provide regular, targeted management information from existing circulation system data without incurring unacceptable additional costs. Their project used circulation statistics to inform quarterly subject category reports for subject librarians to support decisions in use of their book budgets. The reports itemised performance records for acquisitions achieving their first year on the shelf, and subject summaries of average use per item and percent of unused items. Reports were also tailored to provide summary diagnostic information for senior management.

Research into collection use measured by circulation continued to be focused on economic issues. Crotts (1999) argued that departmental allocations for monographs were overwhelmingly calculated on *anticipated* user behaviour and did not factor in *actual* demonstrated behaviour. His research found that circulation was largely not correlated to levels of subject student enrolment or size of subject expenditure, taken either individually or jointly. Identifying circulation as the single most empirically supported parameter of demand, Crotts suggested a model for allocating subject funding based on demonstrated use. Kao (2003) supported the case for funding according to use. His study explored circulation database mining to extract decision support information for academic library acquisition budget allocation. Kao found that considerable scatter in user borrowing confirmed cross-departmental use of subject material.

2.4 Resource Selection

Circulation research encompassed research on book selection to identify differences in use by selection method. Investigation focused on two main areas – who made selections and what selection criteria were used.

2.4.1 Selectors

Responsibility for collection development in academic libraries began to be transferred from academic to librarian authority during the 1960s (Thomas 1987, p.489). This shift, although a practical response to increasing faculty workloads, was not universally welcomed by academics. The literature reflects a competitive interest in which group was most effective as resource selectors. An early, landmark study conducted by Evans (1970) in four American university libraries examined circulation activity in relation to selection agent (librarian, classroom faculty, approval plan). Analysis of at least 500 randomly selected titles per agent type at each institution showed librarians tended to select greater numbers of materials that were subsequently used than did faculty. Faculty, in turn, out-performed book jobbers.

Subsequent studies did not produce uniform results. Some supported Evans' findings, but many did not. Sellen (1985) reported that Bingham's 1979 replication of the Evans study found that books selected by faculty were circulated more frequently than those by librarians – except in the humanities. Millson-Martula (1985) found no clear advantage in selectors, while Vidor and Futas (1988) found librarians superior only in the area of professional business materials. In a review of the literature, William Hannaford (1990) concluded that there was no appreciable quantitative evidence that librarians rated higher than faculty as resource selectors. Further, he found that the studies that did show a librarian advantage did so by the slightest of margins. Although himself a librarian, Hannaford suggested that claims of the superiority of librarians as selectors were based more on emotion than on empirical evidence (Hannaford 1990, p.34).

There is evidence that research emphasis is changing from proving one set of selectors superior to finding methods of using such information to improve the selection process. The hypothesis of the Dinkins (2003) research was that teaching faculty selections *should* have higher circulation than librarian selections. Where this was proved false, recommendations were made for librarians to work with departmental faculty to enhance selection ability by identifying sources and encouraging selection to fit curricula and assignments (Dinkins 2003, p.47). Collaboration had replaced competition as a purpose of the study.

2.4.2 Selection Criteria

As circulation statistics came to be accepted as a valid measure of use for teaching and learning materials in academic libraries, attention turned toward successful selection of books in these areas. Concerns were raised about the under-use of separate undergraduate libraries specifically set up to support taught-course students. In a symposium on the subject, Sharon Hammer asserted that the successful ones had collections that “reflect the curriculum and are kept current through faculty contact and knowledge of the undergraduate instructional programs” (Person 1982, p.12). Rambler (1982) concurred and advocated syllabus studies of host institutions to foster library-curriculum integration.

The importance of curricula support, as well as library involvement in curricula planning, was reiterated by Bird and Roberts (1998). Their account of Library and Information Service (LIS) collaboration with teaching staff at Keele University emphasised the benefits of working together to identify, acquire and promote useful resources. The role of reading list provision and management in this regard was thought to be highly important for maximising both library use and the quality of students’ assessed work (Bird & Roberts 1988, p.557-558).

2.5 Recommended Reading

It is assumed that lecturer recommendations for student reading will identify a core collection of materials to support curricula teaching and learning. Obtaining course reading lists and the resources recommended therein is, therefore, a key objective for academic libraries.

2.5.1 Student Use of Reading Lists

Saunders (1982) questioned the validity of the assumption that faculty recommendations directed student library use. His study involved interviewing students at the checkout counter about the reason for borrowing and the method of selecting the books just borrowed. Data was collected over eighteen one-hour periods between November 1981 and March 1982. A total of 240 students were interviewed concerning 364 titles. Only 58 titles (15.9% of the total) were identified by the students as faculty recommendations. Subsequent investigation found that the majority of the titles borrowed by these students were in the high-use category (6 or more circulations). Only 26 of these (10.5% of the total), however, had received unqualified recommendations from a commonly used standard undergraduate core collection tool (i.e. *Choice*). The student use-defined core collection did not equate to the institution quality-defined core collection. Although the sample size was very small, Saunders concluded that students either did not receive or did not rely on faculty guidance in selection of library reading material (Saunders 1982, p.22).

Library literature largely does not support Saunders' assessment, although some concerns have been expressed by the publishing sector. John Davies, director of the Council of Academic and Professional Publishers (CAPP), reported that a student survey conducted by his organisation in 1998 found that the reading list was the key starting point for most students in assessing which books to buy, but it was not the only factor. Value for money was seen as more important than price, and perceived inadequate library provision encouraged student book purchase. One in five students, however, claimed that lecturer recommendations were "too academic" to purchase (Davies 1998, p.25). Two years on, Davies pointed out that student purchase of textbooks remained static despite rising student numbers. CAPP research, he claimed, indicated that the quality of reading lists was a crucial factor in this and that "students would buy more books if they could be persuaded that these were of direct benefit to them" (Davies 2000, p.34).

2.5.2 The Student Reading Database Project

Library literature does reflect problems associated with reading lists – primarily the problem of obtaining them. A number of articles detail the evolving strategies university libraries tried to obtain reading lists from academic staff and to use them to improve library provision for taught courses.

The earliest account of systematically tackling the reading list problem is also the first instance found in the literature of harvesting reading list related data to support collection management decisions. Vautier and White (1991) describe the development of the Student Reading Database (SRD) Project at the Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia. The aim of the SRD was to establish an agreed reading list provision policy between library and faculty departments that would upgrade the library collection to meet course needs within budget constraints. In order to do this, it was determined to collect, manipulate and analyse reading list data.

It was hoped that the consultation with and reports to faculty staff would help build working relationships to support taught-course students and faculty as well as improve cost-effective library spending. Care was taken to limit increases to academic staff workload stemming from the project. Library staff handled all data input in order to minimise faculty staff time commitment and maximise departmental cooperation with the project. To support this, the project was allocated funding for additional staff to take up the workload. The project was initially trialled with about a quarter of the faculty departments.

Results from the first year of the SRD project provided valuable information for collection and reading list management. This included identification of inactive SRD titles, levels of use of active titles, overlap of demand for SRD titles across courses, and identification of inaccurate references in course outlines. Information gained was acted on during the year to improve provision of both resources and recommendations. Bibliographic

citations were more accurate and use of newest editions more consistent on SRD than non-SRD courses by the end of the year due to library staff quality control. Circulation levels of additional copies acquired based on information drawn from the SRD database justified expenditures on such. Feedback solicited by a faculty survey was generally positive and included suggestions to modify reports for further improvements. The project was judged to have met its aims and was intended to be built upon (Vautier & White 1991, pp.123-128), but no information on further developments is available.

2.5.3 Developments in Reading List Management

The literature reflects developments in reading list management at universities. Smith (1993) reported on the Reading List Project at Aston University aimed at investigating the feasibility of collecting and processing readings lists on a regular and systematic basis. A year later, the University College of North Wales (UCNW) at Bangor undertook a similar project (Stopforth 1994). Yeadon and Cooper (1995) described steps taken at Imperial College London to obtain reading lists following a review and reorganisation of their book selection practices. Sherwood and Lovecy (1997) reported on the progress of and updates to the Bangor project. Beverly Britan at the British Library of Political and Economic Sciences (BLPES) was awarded the Robinson Medal for Innovation in Library Administration for her work as Taught Course Support Officer – partly for her work in creating mechanisms and relationships that encouraged timely reading list acquisitions for the library (Mendelsohn 1996).

These accounts showed a common concern with improving *processes* used to obtain reading lists from faculty in a timely manner. The strategies employed were similar, including prompting and chasing letters to faculty staff soliciting reading list submissions, obtaining course administration information, setting up in-house databases and diverting staff resources to manage and process reading lists. And all encountered similar difficulties: late or non-submission of reading lists to libraries; uneven response rates across faculty departments; lecturer resistance to library involvement with reading lists and resentment at perceived additional tasks involved; significant implications for library staff time commitments and problems with library computer systems' limitations. Levels of reading list acquisitions improved in each account, but the recorded successes were receiving just 48% to 68% of course reading lists – hardly the complete coverage of lists that had been attempted.

The most noticeable differences between the accounts of these projects and the SRD Project are the lower levels of faculty staff involvement reported in the former. Although not explicitly stated as such, the lines of communication between library and faculty staff seemed to be used mainly to convey *library* needs and demands. In contrast, the SRD Project team stipulated “a constant need to check that library perceptions of the project and its intended outcomes are understood by academic staff and aligned with their needs and those of their

students” (Vautier & White 1991 p.123). Where the SRD Project focused on customer needs, the later projects all focused on library needs.

In setting up the later projects, the planning teams consisted entirely of library staff -- no report of faculty representation features in any of the accounts. Oddly, although UCNW library “recognized a need for better liaison with academic staff with regard to reading lists”, they chose to meet only with local bookshop staff when planning their project (Stopforth 1994, p.14). They hoped to take advantage of the bookshops’ existing systems for collecting lists for stock management and to avoid asking lecturers to produce extra lists for the library. Library/faculty relations may have been strained by the library’s lack of book funds – Bangor still retained a strict policy of academic selection of library resources. Library staff could check reading lists, if they could obtain them, to identify titles not held, but they could not order those items. Their only option was to inform academics that the recommended reading for their course was not in stock and encourage them to submit order requests. The strongest resistance to any of the library reading lists projects was also recorded at Bangor where some staff members objected that responsibility for reading lists should remain with lecturers and that student needs were adequately met between the departmental libraries and the bookshops – which *were* supplied with reading lists (Stopforth 1994, p.17). Library/faculty relationships did not seem to encourage collaboration at Bangor.

2.6 Library/Faculty Relations

Concerns about academic library/faculty relations feature in library literature mainly after responsibility for collection development and budget management had commonly devolved from faculty to library control.

2.6.1 Faculty Participation in Collection Development

Sandler (1985) advocated formal recognition of the library/lecturer interdependency and implementation of a system of cooperation between the groups to support organisational goals. Sandler proposed a library scheme to organise faculty participation in collection development, including evaluating the collection and purchase of materials. Sandler’s plan was ambitious and would have required unstinting cooperation from faculty staff.

Dittemore (1992) doubted that continued academics’ cooperation could be assured. Her account of faculty participation in collection development recorded decreased cooperation following the shift in responsibility for primary selection from faculty to library. Dittemore’s findings – based on three years of participant observation, statistics, and both formal and informal interviewing – were that faculty staff had lost both a sense of responsibility for the collection and the departmental “social controls” that encouraged their

involvement in discharging that responsibility (Dittemore 1992, p.84-85). She concluded that real outreach efforts to cultivate departmental contacts and maintain these through responsiveness and sensitivity to departments' changing information needs would be necessary to gain much-needed faculty collaboration (Dittemore 1992, p.88).

Chu (1995 & 1997) examined librarian-faculty relations in collection development seeking to identify factors that would support a working relationship. By conducting separate focused interviews with librarians and faculty representatives, he found that their communications were almost entirely concerned with the *processes* of collection development not the purpose of and roles in collection development. This created ambiguities for members of both groups. Chu recommended "institutional discussion of values to be shared concerning the role of the library and the purpose of collection development" to find common ground in supporting institutional goals (Chu 1995, p.148-149). He further concluded that this would require both a formal structure for collaboration and encouragement of opportunities of informal contact to build working relationships (Chu 1997, p.19).

2.6.2 Successful Partnerships

Chu's conclusions and recommendations were supported in a more recent analysis of literature on partnerships undertaken in connection to partnerships in the field of NHS Health Libraries. The material reviewed was not drawn exclusively from library literature, but the authors, Wildridge *et al.* (2004), considered the partnership principles to be generic and applicable to library partnerships. They listed critical success factors in creating successful partnerships identified by the Wilder Research Centre. These include:

- shared vision and unique purpose;
- concrete, attainable goals and objectives;
- members see collaboration as in their self-interest;
- members share a stake;
- clear roles and policy guidelines;
- flexibility and adaptability;
- open and frequent communication;
- informal relationships and communication links.

This review also identified barriers to successful partnerships, including: perception that the responsibility for the work belonged to one agency, that there was an imbalance of power or that collaboration was too expensive in terms of time, workload or funds (Wildridge 2004, p.7-8).

2.7 The Follett Report

The Follett Report (1993) issued by the Joint Funding Councils Libraries Review Group, examined library provision for higher education (HE) in the United Kingdom. It considered the role of libraries in support of teaching separately from that of in support of research (Follett 1993, p.13). The need to improve liaison between library and teaching staff, and to clearly define their respective responsibilities was identified (Follett 1993, p.7). In reference to library acquisitions policy, it questioned whether lecturers were liaising effectively with libraries over reading lists (Follett 1993, p.29). In reference to the needs and responsibilities of teaching staff, it identified that problems arose from “insufficiently integrated flows of information about what material is required by students” and where they should find it. It further suggested that providing a “single database of reading list material”, to be accessed by “students, lecturers, library staff and relevant bookshops” could help overcome these problems (Follett 1993, p.37-38). In this and other areas, the report emphasised the potential of technology for HE libraries:

The exploitation of IT is essential to create the effective library service of the future.

(Follett 1993, p.9)

2.8 The E-Factor

The need for collaboration to respond to the demands and opportunities associated with the rapidly emerging electronic information environment is linked in the literature to the provision of recommended resources.

Recognition of the need for academic culture change in regard to information technology and electronic information resources was built into the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) Electronic Libraries (eLib) Programme. Supporting studies were commissioned to evaluate and monitor cultural change in response to electronic libraries (Davies *et al.* 1997) (Edwards, Day & Walton 1998). The findings of the former study focused largely on, “whether eLib has created appropriate preconditions for longer-term cultural change” (Davies *et al.* 1997, p.iii). The later study aimed at “investigating the views, needs and perceptions of information providers and users in both the wider environment of HE, the organisation, the structure and the strategy and the narrower context of changing roles and relations, training and skills” (Edwards, Day & Walton 1998, p.3). Although primarily concerned with electronic resources, both studies had implications for recommended library resources in general. Emphasis was placed on the need for increased communication and cooperation between library and academic staff to ensure match of resources to curriculum requirements in the move toward resource-based, student-centred education (Edwards, Day & Walton 1998, p.93).

2.8.1 E-Resources

Digitisation and electronic storage of texts was seen as a possible strategy to widen access to and use of high-demand course readings. A number of related projects that created electronic databases of academic reading materials were funded in the United Kingdom by JISC as part of its eLib Programme (Akeroyd 1998, p.31-32, 34). These on-demand publishing/electronic reserve (OD/ER) projects involved academic libraries in working relationships with various partners:

- publishers/rights holders of copyright permissions;
- computer services personnel to develop and maintain systems to scan, store and deliver the product;
- consortia to share the processes, costs and benefits of creating the e-resources; and, crucially,
- academics to identify, and promote student use of target materials for the projects from their recommended reading (i.e. reading lists).

Issues of academics' roles in the success of OD/ER initiatives were at first overshadowed in the literature by discussion of problems related to copyrights, permissions procedures, systems security, pricing and delivery methods.

Academics' issues were, however, increasingly acknowledged in the literature as the projects progressed. Halliday (1996) admitted that the SCOPE (Scottish Collaborative On-demand Publishing Enterprise) project team had initially considered technical and copyright issues of paramount importance, but had learned over the first year of cultural and political issues with academics that needed addressing. The importance of academics' promotion to the success of on-demand publishing projects was echoed in later accounts of OD/ER projects (Rowlinson 1997, p.454) (Akeroyd 1998, p.32).

OD/ER project teams also discovered that some of the problems associated with traditional reading lists transferred to electronic provision of materials. The ACORN (Access to Course Readings via Networks) survey of academics found that over half the respondents indicated that they updated their lists one week before the start of semester – well short of the time required for the processes of gaining permissions and digitisation. Further, when the lists were submitted, only 16% of respondents indicated which materials fell into the “high-demand” category – which left the project staff without guidance on selecting target materials (Woodward, Gadd & Goodman 1998, p.8).

Little was written about strategies for increasing academics' cooperative involvement. Pickering (1999), reporting on issues identified by SCOPE, simply stated that early preparation and submission of reading lists was necessary and that a cultural change within institutions was required (Pickering 1999, p.215). Dugdale (1999) concurred. Her experience with academic/librarian partnership during the ResIDe Electronic Reserve Project at the University of the West of England (UWE) demonstrated enormous benefits realised through close collaboration with departmental faculty. Unfortunately, this level of

collaboration was achieved with only a few enthusiastic academics. Problems of late submission of lists, lack of promotion and lack of response to library requests for basic administrative information were more common. This led Dugdale to declare a need for rethinking the roles and relationships of faculty and library staff in regard to electronic provision of course information (Dugdale 1999, p.20-23).

2.8.2 E-Management

While electronic provision of high-demand course readings offered the possibility of large improvements in resource availability, it represented only one aspect of library support of taught courses. Application of information technology to academics' reading lists themselves seemed to offer improvements to accessing *all* recommended library resources as well as improvements to the processes of library/faculty cooperation in providing these. Online reading lists could be linked directly to library catalogues to provide instant access to resource availability. Shared access to online reading lists could eliminate the need for production of multiple lists to serve diverse functions. The literature reflects re-examination of reading list form and use in on-line environments.

Recognition that data gleaned from linking electronic reading lists to library circulation systems could provide management information to help fully utilize recommended reading resources came well after initial research on digitising high-demand resources. Wall and Williams (1999) noted the potential advantages of electronic provision of short loan materials, but pointed out that circulation information on reading list items could be used to maximise demand satisfaction for hard copy resources as well (Wall & Williams 1999, p.150).

Brewerton and Knight (2003) reported the development of Loughborough Online Reading List System (LORLS) at the Pilkington Library, Loughborough University. The project, initiated in 1999 by University's Learning and Teaching Committee, involved Committee representatives, the university's administrative computing unit and the Library in an effort to improve the online reading list service. The course-reading module of the Library Management System used at that time limited what lecturers could put on the list (to materials held by the library) and how they could cite them. Additionally, lecturers could neither annotate lists and list items nor display them in other than alphabetic order. These limitations, combined with lecturers' usage of the University virtual learning environment to post their reading lists, may have contributed to the very low percentage of lists submitted for inclusion on the system. The article details the Library's central role in redeveloping the computer unit's prototype system to address both the needs of the library and the faculty departments in providing the service.

Parker (2004) related some effects of the University of Sheffield library's move to TalisList, an electronic reading list programme, as part of the LibCt project. The Library

changed terms from 'reading lists' to 'resource lists' to reflect the content more accurately, and found that more information was needed by the library concerning lecturers' intended student use of reading lists. Information was needed not only to determine need for multiple copies, but also to inform library staff decisions on list processing – e.g. whether to provide information about or deep links to listed electronic resources.

Further investigation of online reading list use from the LibCt project was carried out through a small pilot project by Freeman and Parker (2004). A few academics were invited to create 'ideal' multi-resource electronic lists to support their modules, which the library resourced and linked with an emphasis on providing electronic offprints of journal articles not held in stock. The library evaluated the usage of the service and estimated the costs of providing it to the entire University. Findings from student citations and circulation data of the recommended resources combined with survey data from both students and tutors included:

- few essential items needed by all students were identified;
- not all recommended resources were used, even though some were clearly relevant to submitted work;
- students indicated that the main influence on their reading was tutor referral in lectures or lecture notes;
- lengthy lists may have accounted for student reliance on tutor reinforcement referrals;
- the time required for the whole process (list creation by tutors and resource acquisition by the library) was a major deciding factor in the project's success.

Both accounts of the LibCt project concluded that the key issue in reading list resource provision was pro-active and mutual dialogue between the Library and the departments – on an individual and a group basis – to investigate what academics are trying to achieve and how that could be supported (Parker 2004, p.41) (Freeman & Parker 2004).

Secker (2004) describes how reading list provision featured in a project to integrate digital libraries and virtual learning environments that focused on requirements for online reading list systems. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with all reading list stakeholders, i.e. learning technologists, students, library and academic staff, to gather data for user needs analysis. Secker reports it was, "difficult to balance the needs of the reading list as a functional tool used for ordering resources, and its pedagogical application within the course" (Secker 2004, p.42). Problems with stakeholder understanding and acceptance of responsibilities involved in changing processes and tools for recommended resource provision were found. Secker concludes that culture change to foster collaboration between provider groups is essential to future resource list developments.

2.9 Summary

Literature on reading list use in academic communities is limited, but information relating to the issues involved is found in the literatures on other library topics. Circulation studies have provided evidence that academic library collections are underused. Circulation as a measure of research use for library materials was found to be controversial. Application of circulation studies to manage those resources generally found on reading lists, i.e. undergraduate and taught-course collections, was found to be more acceptable. In this context, studies have been used both to inform possible redistribution of subject book funds and in attempts to identify performance indicators for future acquisitions. Library literature on circulation studies also provides information on resource use by selector, comparing librarian and academic selections. Later literature reflects a shift of emphasis to the need for library/faculty collaboration in shaping collections to fit curricula. Reading list literature largely concerns library difficulties in obtaining and administering lecturer reading lists. Finally, library literature on electronic information provides information about the role and format of reading lists in the electronic environment. This literature also reiterates the need for Library/lecturer collaboration in e-resource provision, and calls for a change in academic culture to facilitate the processes.

Chapter 3

Methods

3.1 Conduct of Research

The research was organised into stages to fulfil the stated aim of investigating the role of recommended reading lists in academic communities and their usefulness as management tools. The first stage of research, the Literature Review, laid the foundations for all further research. The second and third stages each related to practical applications to achieve the research objectives:

- Review developments and issues in measuring use of library materials.
- Examine use of reading list material and compare use across academic disciplines.
- Identify and explore factors that influence use of material on reading lists, including
 - nature of lists
 - discipline
 - academics' views of list purpose, use and promotion
 - timely provision of lists to academic librarians.
- Investigate librarian views of value of reading lists as collection management tools and factors affecting that value.
- Identify what the library can do, if appropriate, to overcome barriers to profitable use of lecturer reading lists in meeting organisational goals.

3.2 Review of Literature

The literature search was a lengthy and highly iterative process. Repeated search refinements were necessary to either filter out less relevant materials or find relevant information within broader contexts. Retrieved materials generated further search activity by stimulating ideas for new avenues of enquiry as well as by providing citations to related materials. Database records of useful materials also provided additional descriptors to investigate.

An initial federated search was conducted on MetaLib, the Library resource locator, to estimate amounts of relevant materials in the literature. The most relevant databases identified from the cross-search were:

- *LISA (Library Information Science Abstracts)*
- *ZETOC*
- *ArticleFirst*
- *BHI (British Humanities Index)*
- *Computing and Information Systems*

These databases were later searched individually within their native interfaces to take advantage of any additional functionality, such as enhanced search or subject thesaurus

support, available there. The following databases, not configured to be cross-searched within MetaLib, were also found to contain relevant literature:

- *ISI Web of Science*
- *Emerald Searchable Full Text*

Searches employed for locating information relating to the research aims were constructed from combinations of variations of the following Key Words:

- reading or resource or material or information or book
- list or recommended or required or core
- academic or university or college or higher education
- library
- use or usage or circulation or loans or borrowing
- research or study or statistics
- undergraduate or taught course
- curricula
- selection or selector
- cooperation or collaboration or partnership or relations or relationships
- librarian
- academics or lecturers or tutors or faculty or departments or teaching
- online or electronic
- culture change

Facilities for stemming and wildcards were used as directed in each database to reduce numbers of search terms required to retrieve references to variations on any term. Thesauri, where provided, were also used to identify preferred terms, which reduced need for alternative terms to be included. Proximity operators were used to reduce numbers of false drops from multiple word terms. Records of searches and databases searched were maintained to prevent duplication of effort. Materials identified for further investigation that were neither held by the Library nor available electronically were ordered through the Interlibrary Loan system.

3.3 The Project Database

A database was designed to assist in exploring both the value of reading lists in selecting library resources that are taken up by students and the possibility of extracting collection management information from associating circulation information with reading recommendations. The ReadingList-Use database was designed to hold and manipulate data drawn from Loughborough University's Aleph Library management system (LMS) and LORLS (Loughborough On-line Reading List System). The researcher designed the database, but all code used to develop, populate and access the database was written and applied by the Library Systems Team.

Resource and operational restrictions limited the extent of this phase of the research to an initial exploration of identifying possible management information available from the

database. More focussed investigation of the data would have required either repeated Systems Team coding of queries, or Systems Team time to design and implement an application programme for general use, and this could not be justified for the current project. Although initial implementation was aimed at supporting this research project, the database was designed to facilitate possible development for future Library use.

The database (see Figure 3A, p. 22) consisted of four tables:

- **LIST Table** – holds data defining individual reading lists;
- **RL-WORK Table** – holds data defining individual works held on reading lists;
- **LIST-WORK-LINK Table** – link table associating works with reading lists (resolved many-to-many relationship between LIST and RL-Work tables);
- **DEMAND Table** – holds circulation data on reading list works.

Fields chosen for the RL-WORK table were much more basic than those described in some earlier circulation studies (Kent *et al.* 1979 ; Hart *et al.* 1986), as this research focused on recommended collection use rather than individual work characteristics. Even so, it was not possible to implement all fields as originally designed. See Appendix A for information relating to the database table field specifications, data requirements and data constraints.

3.3.1 Database Development and Population

Data for the **LIST Table** were retrieved from LORLS. Data for the **RL-WORK** and **DEMAND** tables were retrieved from the Aleph Library Management System. The project database was developed in MySQL on a discrete desktop PC to protect LORLS during the project development work. Scripts were developed in response to a list of possible questions (see Appendix B) that the researcher and Library staff might want the database to answer. Scripts were written in Perl to access the project database and to import data from LORLS and the LMS. All work described in this paragraph is credited to team leader Gary Brewerton and Dr Jon Knight of the Pilkington Library Systems Team.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

An initial run of queries based on the questions in Appendix B returned a great deal of data, much of which was intended to facilitate future, focused research. Deep analysis was not performed in this first examination of Library circulation data on recommended reading works. Instead, the data retrieved on Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 12, and parts of 15 were entered on Excel worksheets to facilitate graphing and simple statistical testing. Data was examined in a number of contexts to search for established trends in reading list work borrowing and to note any observed anomalies that might be investigated. Such investigation was not pursued, but explanations

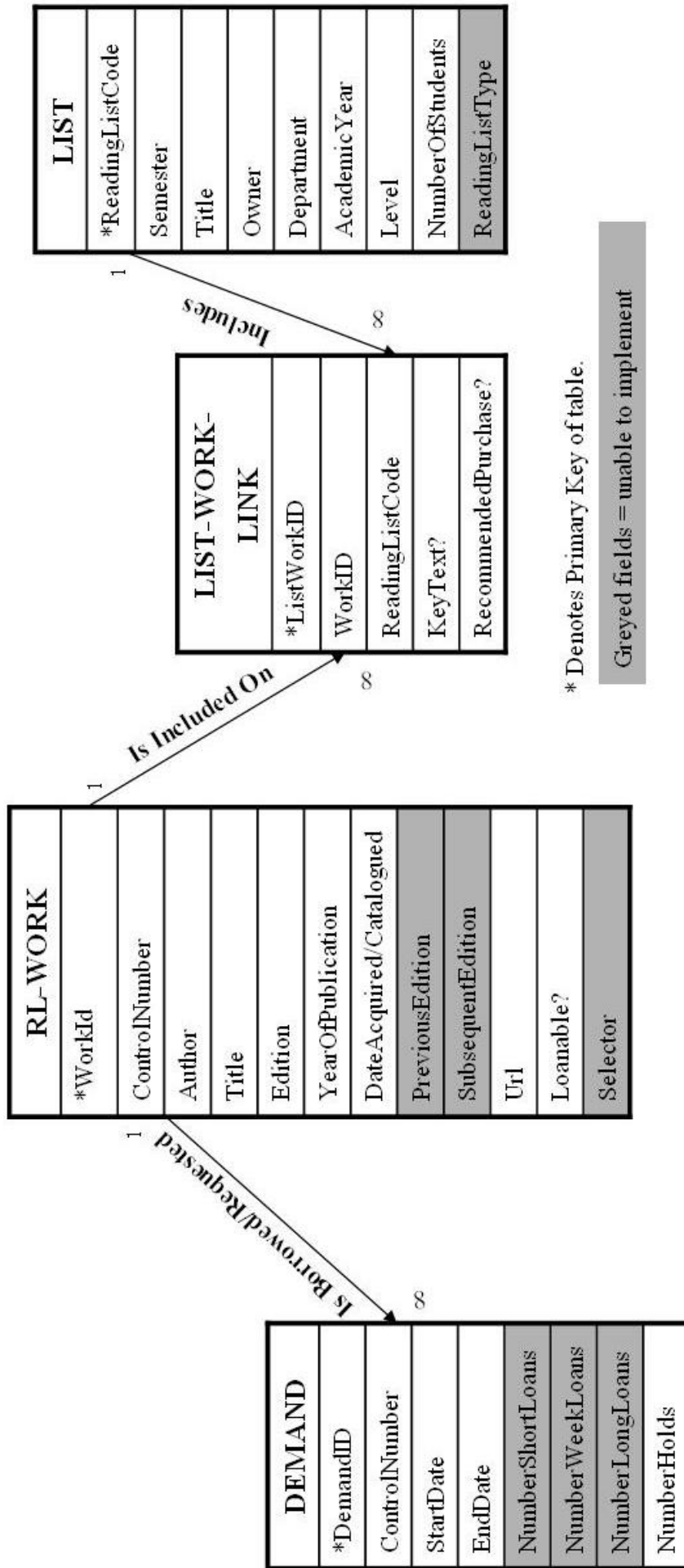


Figure 3A: ReadingList-Use Database

were offered as to why it might be profitable to do so. Graphs were produced to illustrate information that was identified by the researcher as having potential value for Library collection management and customer feedback.

3.4 The Focus Groups

Information to assist in the management of recommended resources cannot be extracted from reading list data if reading lists are not made available on Library systems. Qualitative research was designed to explore the use and barriers to use of reading lists on LORLS both by the Library and by Academic Staff. Use of focus groups was chosen to try to identify any differences in perspectives of the two groups, discover factors that influenced their use of the reading list system, and generate ideas that might contribute to reducing barriers to that use. Focus groups were preferred to surveys and either individual or group interviews for this research, because it was hoped more free-flowing group discussion of the issues involved would uncover a richer range and depth of people's opinions and actions. Secker (2004) had also used focus groups to investigate librarian and library staff user needs for online reading lists, but chose semi-structured interviews for investigating lecturer needs to enable issues to be explored in depth. This was considered, but the free interaction of focus groups was preferred. Focus groups were planned and conducted in accordance with guidance set out by Krueger (2000).

3.4.1 The Participants

Three focus groups were conducted. The first group consisted of Academic Librarians from all three of the Library Faculty Teams. This allowed input from across the spectrum of subjects and reading lists. It was possible to do this because Academic Librarians are responsible for multiple Departments, so the group was of a manageable size – eight librarians participated. The second and third groups were composed of lecturers from each of the seven Departments of the Science Faculty. It proved a misjudgement to schedule the groups in this order, because issues raised by the lecturer groups could not be fed into the single librarian group, as it had been the first to be conducted. In retrospect, it would have been wiser to schedule the librarian group between the two lecturer groups.

The Science Faculty was selected for study because its reading lists represented a range from minimal course text recommendation through directed assigned reading to undirected, extensive bibliographies of resources. Science Faculty reading lists had also benefited from being the subject of the original 1999 Electronic Reading List Project that founded LORLS, and so the service better established with both students and lecturers in this Faculty than in any other. The problem that research results may not apply equally to reading recommendations of all the University Faculties – which have widely differing lists and resources from each other – was considered. Time and resource constraints made it

impractical to attempt to study all three Faculties in this project, so the Science Faculty was selected as having representative lists for all three.

Arrangements were made in early June 2005 for the focus groups to be held in July. The Academic Librarians agreed to allow their monthly Academic Librarians' meeting to be conducted as one focus group. The researcher telephoned senior Science Faculty lecturers to explain the aims of the research and solicit their participation in one of two proposed Academic Lecturer focus groups. Lecturers with responsibility for teaching modules at several levels of study were targeted for recruitment to explore how their use of reading lists might relate to their students' differing levels of study. Most lecturers proved sympathetic to the proposed research and two from each Science Department – one for each focus group – agreed to participate. One individual had to withdraw at the last minute, which meant his department was represented only at the alternative focus group. It is worth noting that all lecturers who agreed to participate had also posted lists on LORLS. Lecturers who had not posted lists were also contacted, but none were available to participate. This was disappointing as their input would have been most valuable for researching barriers to use of the system.

Thought was given to the effect of having this author, a Library employee as well as a University student, facilitate the focus groups. There was a possibility of group perception and reaction to the Facilitator as a Library representative rather than an impartial researcher, or of a Library bias in the questions asked. Resources did not permit contracting a Facilitator entirely unconnected to the research environment. Instead a conscious strategy of the Facilitator adopting a sustained attitude conveying a particular desire to hear – rather than inform – participants' opinions and experiences was decided. Questions were formulated to be completely neutral requests for information that were equally applicable to either type of group.

3.4.2 The Questions

The opening questions were designed to put participants at their ease. These were followed by questions designed to get the groups thinking about and discussing the value of Library resources. After some discussion, a transition question was used to narrow the focus toward provision of reading lists, then key questions on reading list use and barriers were introduced at appropriate points in the discussions – see Appendix C for a complete list of questions. The Facilitator briefly summarised the discussion on each topic before moving on to another in order to ensure that the group concurred with her understanding of what had been said. The final question was designed draw out any further issues the participants might harbour in regard to reading list provision at Loughborough University. Each group was thanked for their participation in the research.

3.4.3 Follow-up Interviews

Separate follow-up interviews with the Library Systems Team Leader and the Manager of the Campus Bookshop were conducted to clarify the facts behind issues raised during the focus groups.

3.4.4 Data Extraction and Analysis

Focus group discussions were tape-recorded and concurrent notes taken by a research assistant. This author transcribed the discussions in detail to include recorded voice inflections and reinforcing behaviours (e.g. facial expressions, gestures) so pronounced as to merit note.

Transcriptions were then topic coded with coloured pens to label recurring words and substance for ready retrieval of data to aid later analysis. Analytic coding, which necessitated adopting file cards and notebooks for record keeping, followed as themes emerged and comparison of data entries stimulated researcher thought and inferential analysis. This analytic strategy was employed in an attempt to ensure that concepts were developed to fit the data rather than data manipulated to fit preconceived notions. Guidance for qualitative data analysis methods was taken from Morse and Richards (2002).

Chapter 4

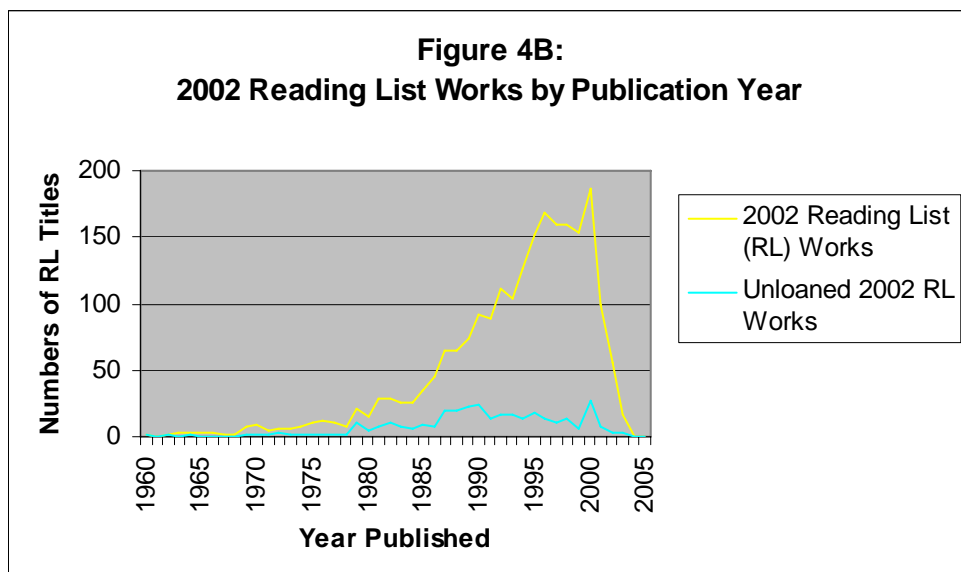
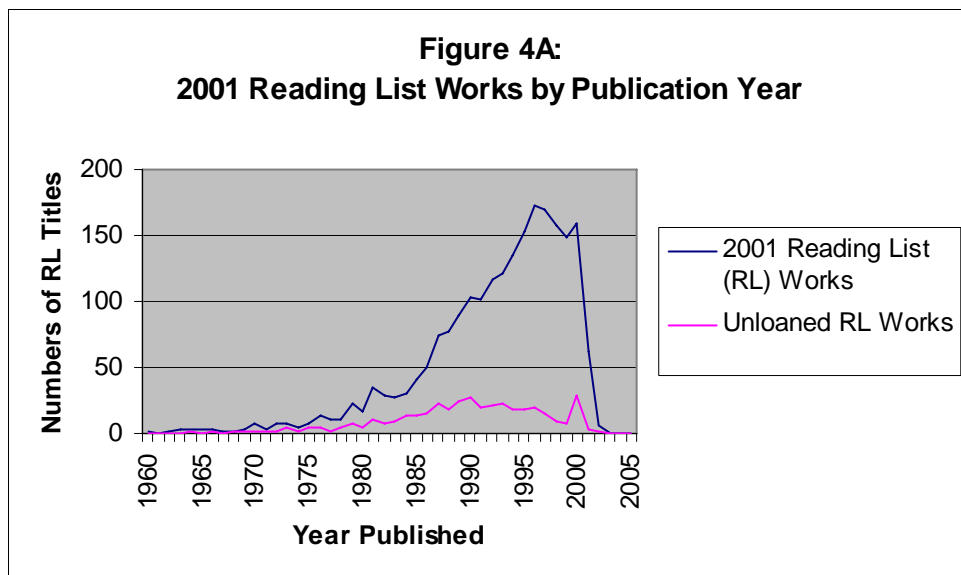
Available Reading List Collection Information

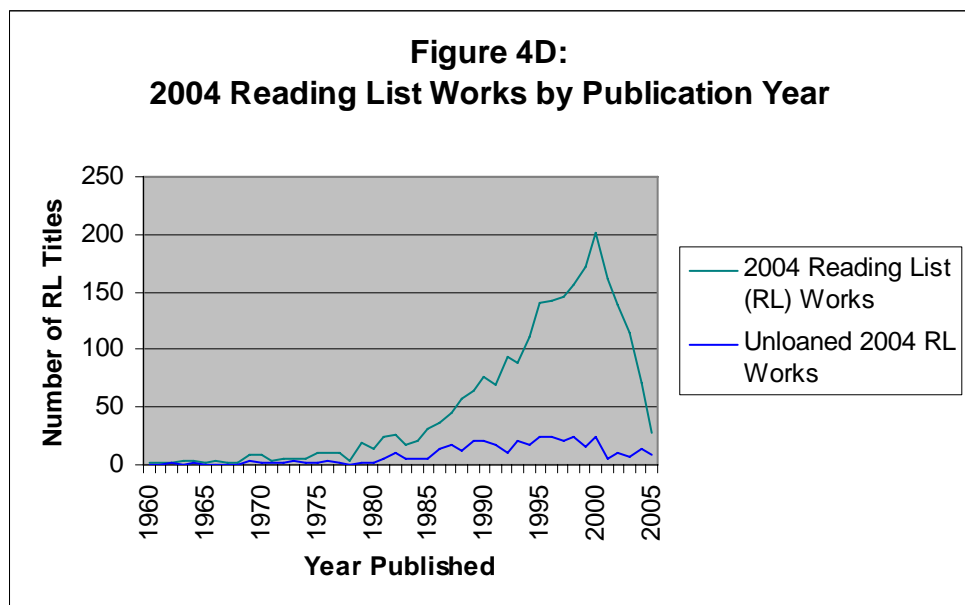
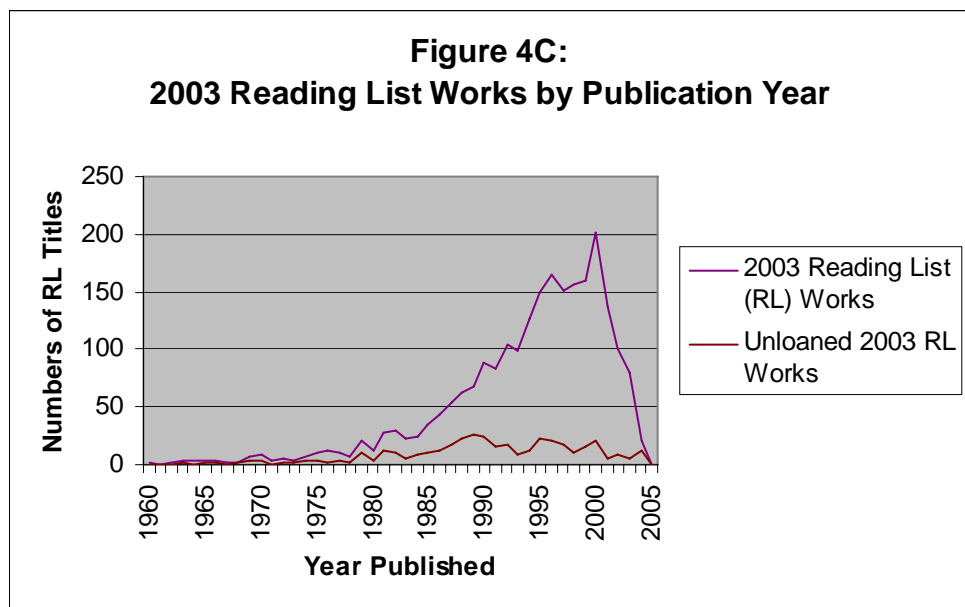
4.1 Examining Taught-Course Collections

Comparison of recommendations held on LORLS with circulation data provides information about the shape and use of the taught-course Library collections.

4.2 The Science Faculty Reading List Collection

Simple line graphs of Science lecturer reading recommendations (Figures 4A-4D) by publication date illustrate the distribution and up-take of these works from the Library over the four years studied. Note that the research was based on the academic calendar, so a number of second-semester recommendations may appear to have been premature, e.g. works published in 2002 recommended on reading lists from 2001.





The upper line of each graph maps the number and publication dates of recommended works for the year pictured. Unsurprisingly for Science subjects, the recommendations centre on relatively recent publications and reflect addition of more current materials each year (see Table 1). During the four years studied, the midpoint publication year – the point from which half the number of recommendations dated from either side – advanced from 1994 to 1997. Similarly, the mode year of publication – the year having the highest number of recommended works published – moved from 1996 to 2000. Progress in either measure was not regular, but did reflect updated lecturer recommendations.

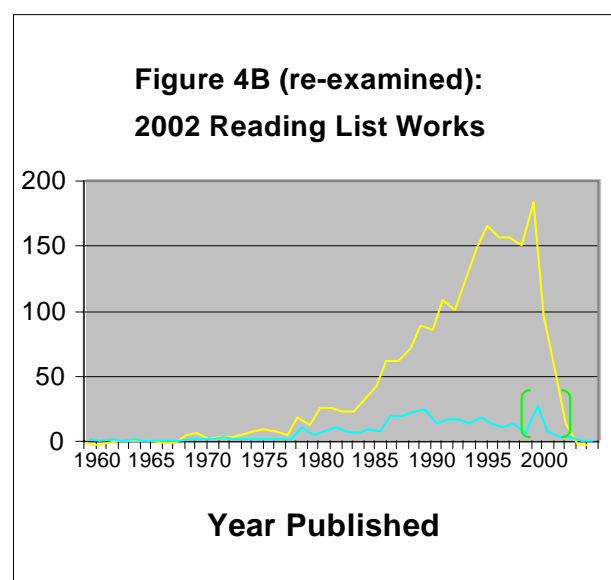
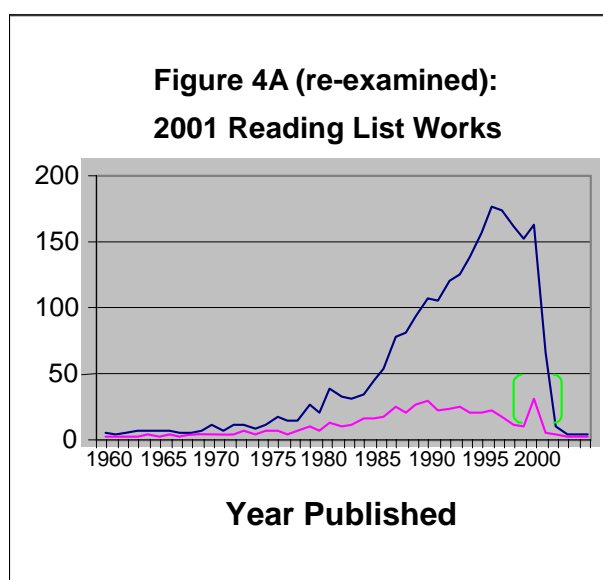
Table 1: Date Distribution of Science Recommended Reading Works

Year Recommended	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of Titles	2196	2199	2319	2365
Midpoint Publication Year	1994	1995	1997	1997
Mode Publication Year	1996	2000	2000	2000

The lower lines of each graph (Figures 4A-4D) map the number of reading list works by year of publication that were not borrowed from the Library collection in the year examined. The difference between the graphed lines at each year marker represents the portion of recommended reading works published in the marked year that were borrowed in the year studied, although no indication is given here as to numbers of loans achieved. The increasing distances between the lines in more recent publication years do, however, indicate a higher take-up of newer materials. The shapes of the graphs across the years of study appear to be quite similar. This is confirmed by the result of a chi square test on the take-up of reading list works which, returning a p-value of 0.141, indicates no significant difference in proportions of loaned to unloaned works over the four years studied.

4.2.1 Circulation Anomalies

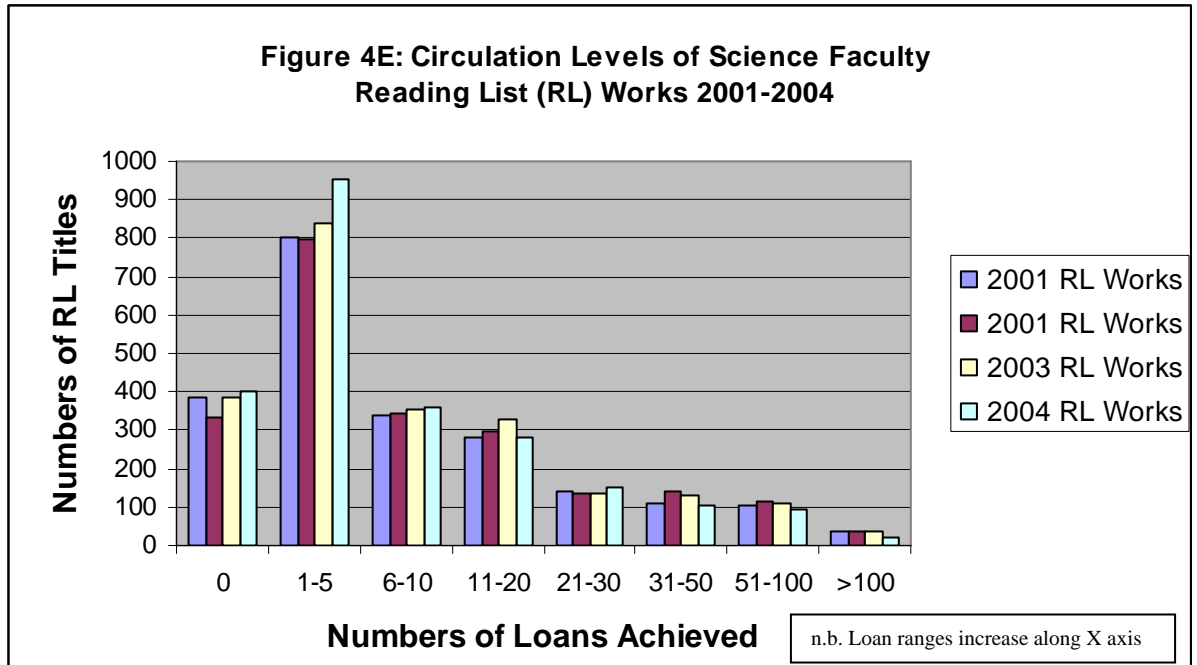
The graphs also appear to reveal an unexplained spike of unloaned Science reading list works published in the year 2000 that was especially pronounced in the first two years examined (see below¹). Given the result of the chi square test, it may be that the spikes merely reflect that there were more recommended works published in 2000 than in any other year for all but the first year studied. However it is also possible that the unloaned works have commonalities that may help explain their failure to circulate. If desired, the details of the unloaned works and of the lists that recommended them could be retrieved for further investigation. The ability to identify and investigate perceived circulation anomalies could provide useful collection management information for these, and other, taught-course resources.



¹ Note spikes in the graphs of unloaned works published in the year 2000 (in green brackets []).

4.3 Levels of Circulation Achieved

Figure 4E shows the levels of loans achieved by Science reading list works throughout the four years studied. The graph indicates that most reading list works circulated repeatedly.

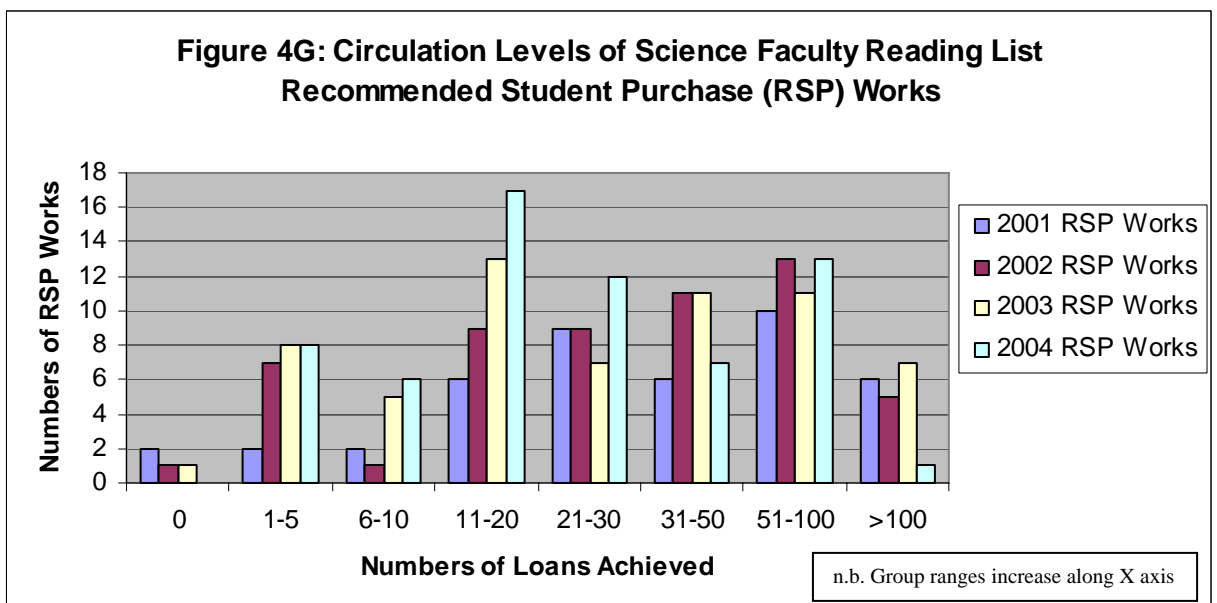
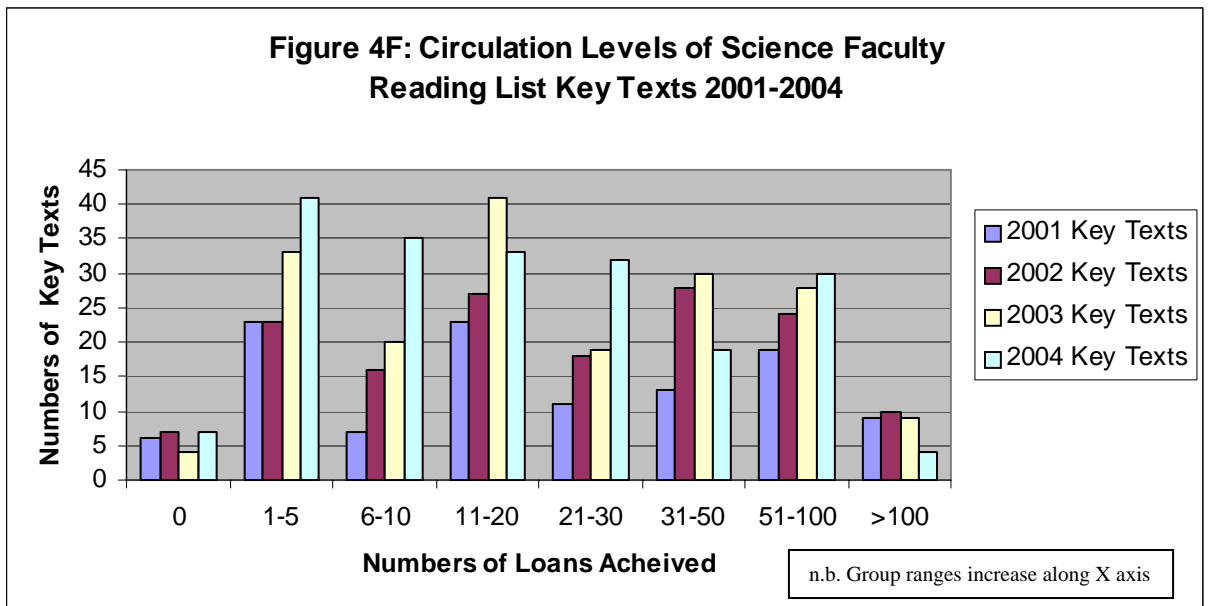


Although significant numbers of reading list works recorded no loans, more than twice as many works achieved one to five loans annually. Hundreds more – over fifty percent of Science reading list titles in each year studied – fell into higher use categories.

Details of demonstrated high-use works may be retrieved to inform possible additional copy or subject acquisition decisions. Information on aggregate student numbers creating demand for such works from cross-module, and even cross-Departmental recommendations could be supplied. The databasing of reading list system data in conjunction with circulation system data allows for levels of demonstrated use of reading list works in any identified student sector to be examined. Recommended reading works' performance for the entire reading list collection, separate Faculties, selected Departments, designated courses or levels of study, and even individual modules could be accessed. The information available could assist in evaluating the Library collection's utility in supporting defined sectors of its target markets.

4.3.1 Effect of Lecturer Recommendations

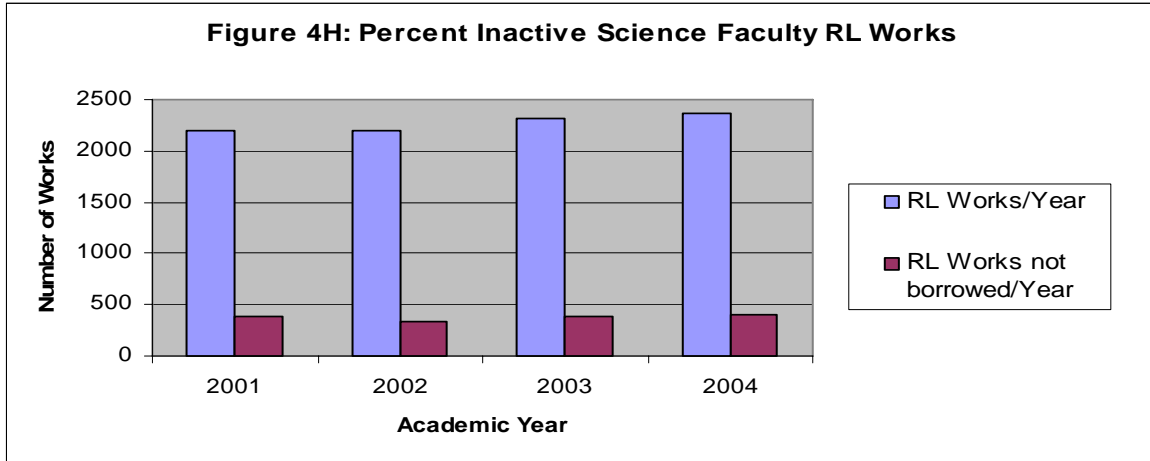
Strength of lecturers' recommendations are indicated, to some extent, by their choice of works to flag as 'Key Text' or 'Recommended to Purchase' on LORLS. Figures 4F and 4G illustrate that these works demonstrated dramatically lower non-use levels and a much more even distribution across levels of use categories than reading list works in general. There were, as expected, fewer numbers of 'Recommended to Purchase' works in the collection, but their levels of circulation would indicate that many students were borrowing Library copies rather than purchasing their own.



It should be noted that additional factors, such as reinforcement of reading recommendations during lectures, may influence circulation over and above the effect of reading list flags. This could possibly be investigated by surveying lecturer practice in promoting recommended resource use.

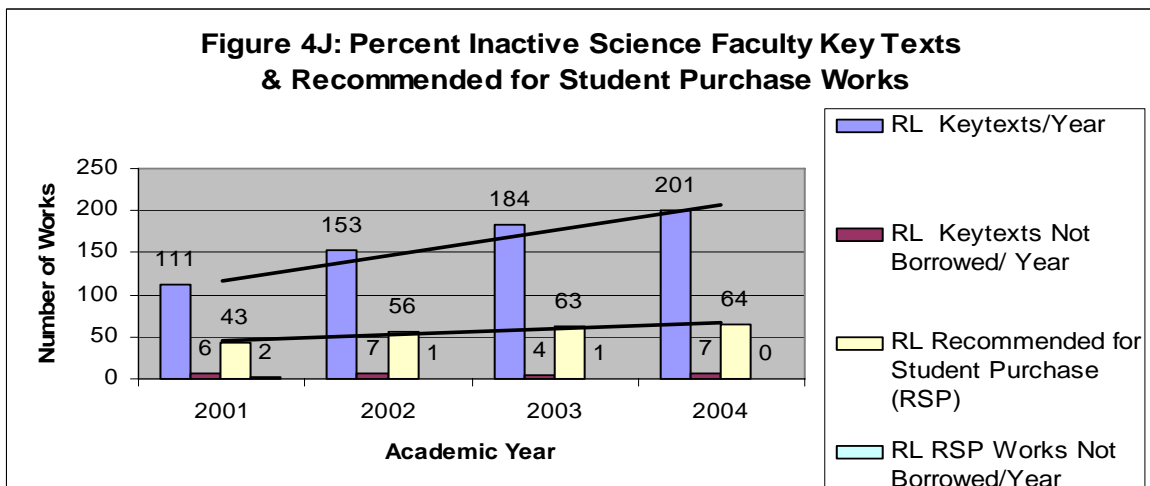
4.4 Extent of Non-Use

Extent of non-use by circulation of reading list works can also be examined. Figures 4H and 4J illustrate the percentage of inactive reading list works in the Science Faculty reading list collection as a whole, and of flagged Science reading list works in particular.



Academic Year	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>
RL Works	2196	2199	2319	2365
RL Works Not Borrowed/ Year	388	333	388	402
% Inactive Science RL Works/Year	17.67%	15.14%	16.73%	17.00%

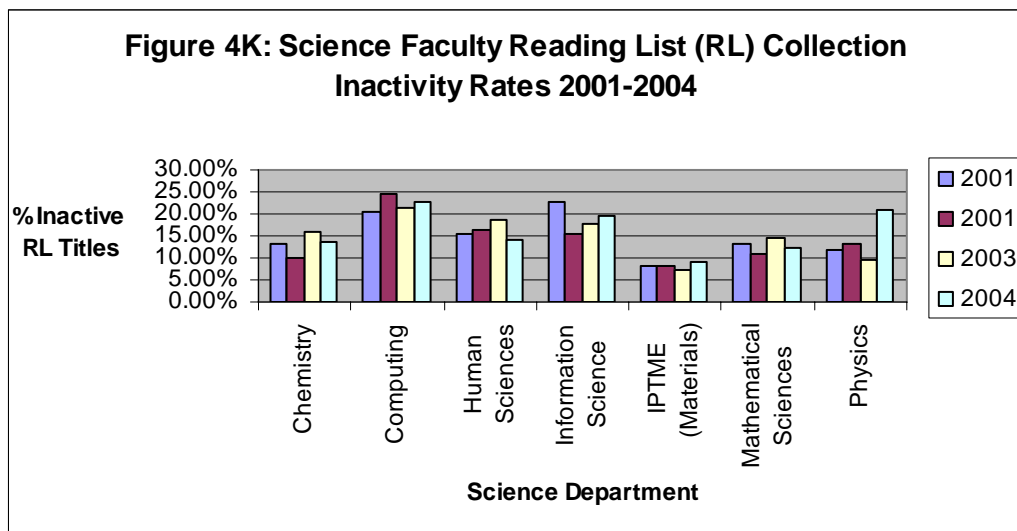
Annual inactivity rates of between 15-18 % in the Science reading list collection are significant and may warrant further investigation.



Flagged Science reading list works did not contribute significantly to inactivity rates in this collection over the four years examined. The numbers concerned were comparatively quite small and, although the trend lines indicated steady rises in both 'Key Text' and, to a lesser extent, 'Recommended for Student Purchase' designations, their inactive numbers in the collection remained extremely small and flat.

4.4.1 Reading List Collection Activity by Department

Information on performance of resources recommended within individual Faculty Departments can provide associated academic librarians with indicators of where additional Library support might be appreciated. Figure 4K provides a comparative view of proportions of unloaned recommended reading works recorded for each Science Faculty Department over the four years examined.

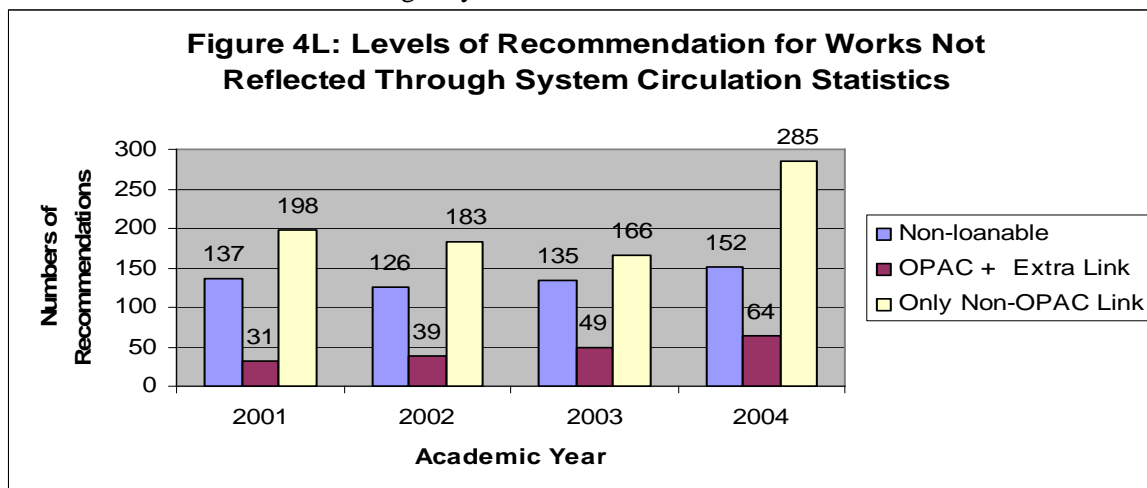


It can be seen that inactivity rates varied from year to year. Overall, Computer Sciences' recommended resources displayed the highest consistent rates of non-use, and IPTME (Materials) the lowest. Variations of non-use rates within Departmental sectors of the Science Reading List collection did not show any established directional trend, i.e. none consistently increased or declined over the four years studied, but most varied within around five percentage points from year to year. A notable exception can be detected in 2004, when Physics' recommended resources showed a non-use rate that had doubled since the preceding year.

Here again, details of the unloaned resources and the lists that recommended them could be retrieved for further investigation. This is essential for estimating the true scale of problems when working with percentages. Physics' proportion of works in the Library reading list collection was by far the smallest of any Science Department's throughout the four years studied. An increase to twenty-one unloaned Physics works out of a recommended collection of just one hundred – up from nine out of ninety-six from 2003 – accounted for the alarming rise in Physics' recommended resource inactivity. Twelve more unloaned books are not alarming from the University Library's perspective, but as these represented a significant proportion of Physics' share of Library taught-course support, it could be a concern. After ascertaining that borrowing had not been prevented by any availability problems, decisions might be made on liaising with academic staff to explore how the Library collection could best be utilised to support their and their students' recommended reading use.

4.5 Beyond the Circulation Desk

Reading lists contain recommendations for works that do not reflect use through statistics obtained from the Circulation Module of the Library Management System. Figure 4L illustrates numbers of recommendations for non-loanable material, such as Reference works and journals. Also shown are numbers of reading list recommendations having URL (Universal Resource Locator) links in addition to OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) links, and recommendations having only non-OPAC links to e-resources.



The graph shows that recommendations for works having an extra URL in addition to an OPAC link (depicted by red columns) had risen steadily throughout the four years examined. This probably reflects an increasing trend to having subscriptions to paper journals in the collection that include access to matching e-journal versions. Recommendations for non-loanable works (blue columns) dropped slightly in 2001, and then rose steadily thereafter. Interestingly, although recommendations for works having only non-OPAC links to e-resources (yellow columns) far outnumbered the other two categories throughout the years examined, their numbers declined steadily through the first three years, but recovered spectacularly in 2004. No explanation is offered for this, but it could be investigated. It is difficult to suggest an immediate practical use for this information, but it does provide some measure of the changing nature of resources and their integration into lecturer recommendations.

4.6 Information Potential of Reading List Data

This research demonstrates types of information that can be extracted through electronic association of lecturer reading recommendations with data held in Library computer systems. Overviews of the shape and take-up of resources recommended to support identifiable sectors of taught-course students can be generated. Circulation trends can be identified and anomalies investigated. Common factors of non-used items can be sought after. Demand for high-use works across the reading list collection can be evaluated. Potentially useful reading list collection management and lecturer feedback information is available for extraction from Library systems.

Chapter 5

Use and Barriers to Use of Reading Lists

5.1 Themes

Thematic analysis of focus group and interview data yielded several dominant issues affecting the use of reading lists and the university reading list system. Themes developed around the value placed on information resources, the perceived purpose of the reading lists, time and timing issues, ownership rights and responsibilities, Library liaison, and perceived benefits and beneficiaries. All parties had workload issues, but the greatest barriers to cooperative effort arose from information and communication shortfalls.

5.2 Value of Library Resources

Introductory questions on what information resources were available to the University community resulted in discussion that gave some indication of the value participants, i.e. lecturers and librarians, placed on Library provided resources. The exchanges also provided some flavour of each group's regard for the other's influence on resource acquisition.

All acknowledged the allure of Google and the Internet – for both students and staff – but identified problems of:

- Information overload
- Unevaluated, often inaccurate material (described by one lecturer as “diabolical rubbish”)
- Amount of time and evaluation skill required to find quality information.

None of the groups dismissed the potential of the Internet as a source of information, but judged most students lacking the necessary information literacy skills to make the best use of it.

All groups agreed that the Library provides quality information often not freely or easily obtained elsewhere. Librarians emphasised that, “The Library has resources far and beyond what appear on lists.” Some of the lecturers, however, made a point of establishing that the Library collection does also contain out-of-date, inaccurate material – particularly in reference to books on the shelves.

Most lecturers voiced opinions that Library resources were valuable, even essential, at some point in University education process. All judged Library provision for their subject adequate to good, but many expressed a perception that this was being degraded year on year by the “continuous cut-back mode” adopted by the Library in response to increasing journal costs. A few individuals clearly held the Library responsible for failing to obtain the funds needed to maintain the quality of the journal collection in their subjects. The issue of the balance between Library support for research and teaching resources was raised along with

speculation that lecturers might be tempted to increase research support by representing research materials as reading list recommendations.

Many lecturers agreed the main value of the Library for lower year undergraduates is provision of core texts to support modules, but a few declared that there was no need for first and second year undergraduates to go to the Library at all, because the subject did not require research at those levels. The main value to finalists and postgraduates was established as provision of journals, databases, research papers, original sources and focused monographs in their subject areas. Electronic resources were especially mentioned as being valued for their currency, availability and ease of access. Some lecturers seemed to regard provision of electronic resources as separate to Library provision:

- “Not Library resources, no, but now *online* papers and reports, that’s the thing...”

5.3 Purpose of Reading Lists

Analysis of discussions on reading list use revealed information regarding the underlying purpose of reading lists. Lecturer perception of reading list purpose seemed to be related to both numbers of items recommended and the version of the list in question.

5.3.1 Numbers of items

Some lecturers admitted their reading lists for lower year undergraduates were quite prescriptive. These lists were described as being very short and consisting of only required textbooks used throughout the modules. Ideally, students would purchase the texts, but these lecturers placed a high value on having multiple copies held in the Library for their students’ use. They were also often unwilling to have their students find alternative texts to study, and cited differing schools of thought, notation systems, and subject coverage as justification for this restriction. They explained that establishing a common framework for teaching and class discussion required student use of the designated materials. While acknowledging that the Library’s necessarily limited provision of textbooks could and did result in negative student feedback on module evaluations, these lecturers were quite clear that their lists were only intended to inform students of required resources. Students must then choose to either purchase the books or compete with their colleagues for access to Library copies.

The purpose behind use of longer lists is not quite so straightforward. Of the lecturers who described their lists as long, all agreed that they did not expect their students to use every item on the list. Examination of their discussed instructions for students on using the lists and on selecting resources to support assessed work, however, suggests two distinct schools of thought on the purpose of reading lists. Both approaches favour providing students with a “pool of resources”, but one approach seems to deliberately discourage independent information seeking behaviour in students.

Some lecturers who set very long lists – over a hundred items – maintained that students needed to be provided lists of “acceptable” sources for their assessed work. Students are invited to choose works from comprehensive reading lists that would seem to amount to selected bibliographies of lecturer approved Library resources on their subject. This may account, in part, for the tendency discussed by the librarians for students failing to search for alternatives to desired but unavailable reading list items. Several lecturers argued that students did not have the experience to evaluate sources reliably, and that it was the lecturers’ responsibility to steer students to the best materials.

Other lecturers setting long lists commented that they did so in an attempt to provide students a reasonable chance of obtaining one or another of equivalent recommended resources in the face of high demand. Although described as “quite” or “rather” long, these lists did not approach the length of those used as bibliographies of approved sources – tens rather than hundreds of items. The common content consisted of one, “Recommended to Purchase” text – with possibly two or three alternative titles to choose from – and three to five alternative Library resources to consult for each major topic in the module. Several lecturers expressed that giving enough alternative sources increased the likelihood that students would be able to obtain a source of known quality as a starting point for their enquiry on a set topic. More importantly, some went on to discuss their strategies for expanding student use of quality resources – typically by providing links to relevant resource databases and by advising students of minimum numbers, types, and ages of sources that would get maximum marks for their assessed work. It was clear from their comments that they expected students to search for resources in addition to items specifically recommended on their reading lists. There was no intent to restrict student enquiry as, in the words of one lecturer, “The reading list does not represent the Library.”

5.3.2 Format

Discussion of reading list format gave further clues to participants’ perception of reading list purpose. A few lecturers talked of annotating their lists with instructions for student use, comments on characteristics of listed resources, and thought-provoking questions for student consideration. Others declared that they did something of the sort on their own lists or on LEARN, but not for the Library lists. Reasons for this were variously given as reluctance to spend time and effort to provide information that the Library did not need, or inability to produce such a list using the form-driven online Library system – which was disputed by those lecturers who were already doing so. These issues of multiple lists, ownership, and knowledge of the system are significant and are analysed separately in later sections. It does emerge, however, that some lecturers perceive that the lists, which they invest time and effort to transform into learning resources in and of themselves, are reduced to mere stock control tools in the eyes of the Library. They saw no profit in wrestling with

LORLS in attempts to reproduce their Word document student handouts, when the Library really only had to know what needed to be ordered.

Librarians recognise that this dual-purpose nature of academic reading lists creates problems. Their discussion of the failure of students to find alternatives to unavailable reading list items led to a suggestion that a message be included on every reading list – as part of the Library brand format – urging students to search for alternative items when necessary. Most librarians thought this a very good idea, but some raised the problem of list ownership. These argued that the reading lists are regarded by lecturers as each lecturer's intellectual property and it is possible that some lecturers might object to students being advised – on *their* lists – to find alternatives to their recommendations. Suggestion in the librarian focus group that such a step could not be taken without first clearing it through the Library Users Committee and the Learning and Teaching Committee met with the objection, “But it's *our* system!” – which was swiftly countered with, “But it's *their* list!” Using the lists for the purpose of obtaining the recommended resources is accepted by lecturers. Altering them for the purpose of encouraging wider use of Library resources may not be. Lecturers, when asked, gave mixed responses. Some said they would not mind the addition to their list, but a few said they would.

5.4 Time

Issues of time and timing were a recurring theme throughout the focus group discussions. References to poor timing of events, time required, and time saved cropped up in almost every topic of conversation.

5.4.1 Timing

Timing was a surprisingly emotive issue. One lecturer described feelings of anger upon receiving the Library reading list update requests at the close of the second semester. It seemed unbelievable that librarians did not realise that lecturers were swamped with work at that time of year; marking had to be completed and summer research started. Research student supervision and conference preparation were demanding lecturer attention. Preparation for the *next* year's teaching was not contemplated until the following September. The stated reaction on seeing the e-mail was, “Oh, Damn! Delete!!”

Many lecturers agreed that their reading list review was done just before classes commenced. They admitted that the Library needed lead time to acquire items not already held – although the time required seemed excessive to them – but declared that many lists did not change significantly from year to year. Some owners of long lists pointed out that their students had many listed alternatives from which to choose, so it did not matter if lists were submitted too late to acquire any new items for that semester. A few argued that sometimes the lead time is essential, e.g. when setting up a new module which might require new

resources, or when a change in lecturer requires use of an entirely different textbook, but it was agreed that these were the exceptions rather than the rule.

Analysis of lecturer statements suggests that the timing of request letters may not significantly affect lecturers' behaviour with respect to timing of reading list submission. Teaching preparation, including reading list revision, simply fits into their work schedule at a later date than the Library would prefer. Resentment expressed at attempts by the Library to alter lecturer work patterns to suit Library timetables may hinder collaborative effort. One group of lecturers suggested that the letter might be amended to request only that orders be submitted for any new recommendations that were not already held in the collection.

5.4.2 Time requirements

Time required to fulfil reading list tasks was raised in every focus group discussion. Librarians spoke of uneven service provision due to staff having to limit use of time-consuming, value adding processes. Potential demand for individual titles could be checked using an in-house programme that retrieves data on numbers of students on each module for which the title has been recommended, but each check takes some time. New edition checks can be run quite quickly on supplier databases, but each check is an additional task. While agreeing that useful collection management and liaison information could be garnered from such data, it was said that gluts of lengthy lists awaiting attention often allowed time for only basic stock check and ordering procedures.

Lecturers all agreed that setting up new lists on LORLS required a great deal of time for longer lists. Many found maintaining existing lists less onerous, but some spoke of spending days just editing their lists. It emerged from the exchanges that some lecturers spent more time than necessary at these tasks because of their unfamiliarity with system capabilities. While admitting that training on the system had been given and was still readily available, many expressed unwillingness to take time out of their schedules to attend further training. General opinion was that the system was too complex if it required more than ten minutes training to learn. They also argued that they used the system too infrequently – once or twice a year – to become adept in its use.

Time constraints were also touched upon in discussing purpose of reading list use. When asked if lecturers felt at all responsible for teaching students how to assess information sources, one replied, "I think it would be very nice if we could do that, but there just isn't time to do everything. It's something we all learned through experience – and not all that easily passed on. It takes *time*." Information Science lecturers said they did teach students to assess sources. Some other lecturers mentioned arranging extra instruction through the Library, but reported problems with low attendance – which made them wonder if they should bother taking the time to arrange such training. A few advocated inviting librarians to

share a lecture session, which students are more likely to attend, but there were comments that there was little time to fit extra material into class schedules.

5.4.3 Time saving

Discussion of reading list time demands naturally led to suggestions for reducing such, which usually involved designing software solutions that would integrate task elements. Librarians wished that lecturer's changes to reading lists, which are automatically forwarded to Library staff that process lists, could come complete with catalogue details and student numbers attached. Both librarians and lecturers suggested that being able to add items to reading lists directly from OPAC searches would save a great deal of time and trouble. Several references were made that it would be nice if "the technology were adapted to the users instead of the other way round."

Time saving came up in a number of related contexts. It was mentioned as a function of reading list use:

- "Reading lists let students get the information they need quickly – that's important."
- "Saving the students' time wading through masses of Internet – or even Library – rubbish resources."
- "Reading lists *do* degrade the process of learning, but students are more interested in the result – the degree – than they are in the learning process. Reading lists save them time needed to learn how to find and evaluate resources for themselves. And the academics are very busy with their research and their teaching, and *they* use reading lists as a strategy to tell their students what to read rather than teaching their students how to find information."

It was mentioned in reference to some of the benefits seen from LORLS:

- "I tend to feel the effort involved is worth it, because the Library then responds in terms of quickly getting an adequate number of copies in stock. I think the books get into the Library faster than they used to."
- "I've actually had some positive experiences where I've gotten an e-mail to say, 'Did you know we've ordered a new edition of this book that is on your reading list?' And they'd even add it to the list! To me, that's very helpful. It saves me a lot of time."

The most frequent, and vehement, lecturer references to time saving, however were in the context of, "What would *really* save time is only having to do one list – *my* list!"

Resentment was expressed by a number of lecturers about being asked to spend their own time and effort repackaging their reading lists for others' use. The issue seemed to go much deeper than lack of time. It concerned underlying issues of reading list ownership rights and responsibilities.

5.5 Ownership rights and responsibilities

A number of problems experienced with collaboration for electronic reading list provision may stem from issues of reading list ownership with associated rights and responsibilities.

5.5.1 Whose list is it?

The question of reading list ownership is not easily answered. The presumption might be that lists belong to the lecturers who create them, but indications of diverse perceptions of ownership are detectable in the group discussions. Lecturers repeatedly referred to a multiplicity of lists based on their *own* reading lists. References to versions of their lists were often enunciated with a particular emphasis on the owner of the version, as in:

- “Oh, no. I would do that on *my* list, but not on the *Library* list.”
- “You have your list, and you have to do it one way for the *LEARN* list, another way for the *Library* list, and then the *Bookshop* list is another one...”

The emphasis used, and the somewhat depreciative tone often employed when speaking of the spin-off reading list versions, gave the impression that these speakers were disassociating themselves from the unwelcome developments. It seemed as if those other lists were problems with which they would rather not be associated.

5.5.2 Reading list rights

Not all lecturers displayed these, what might be described as ‘disowning’, behaviours. Notably, these were not observed in the behaviour of those whose contributions to the conversations indicated that they enjoyed greater ability in using the online reading list system. These lecturers were more likely to advocate using the system and explained how best to do so, but were also more likely to argue for changes to be made that would present the lists as the lecturers desired. The changes most strongly suggested were:

- Shelf locations included on the top level of lists so that printed handouts could be used as browsing tools. This would help familiarise students with the collection and would still work during Library system downtime.
- Reading list records to be displayed in Departmental Citation Styles. This was only possible if lecturers typed in entire entries rather than pulled records from the catalogue, but they were sure some sort of template linked to each Departmental code could be used to transform the data pulled from the catalogue.

It would appear that those who are willing to retain ownership of lists in the Library System expect the system to be responsive to their wants and needs. Their arguments suggested that they were not happy to cede control of their lists entirely to the dictates of the Library or the Library Systems Team.

Librarians expressed some frustration with the notion that they were not free to offer additional information finding advice to students through the lists on *their* Library reading list system. After discussion, however, most conceded that negotiation would be needed before taking such a step. This might surprise many lecturers who expressed opinions that the Library did whatever it pleased with the system and expected lecturers to accept and adapt to any changes.

5.5.3 Reading list responsibilities

Analysis of lecturer perceptions of reading list ownership suggest that these are directly related to their willingness to assume integrated reading list responsibilities. Those who displayed the behaviours interpreted by this researcher as ‘disowning’ also expressed the greatest resentment at expectations of their responsibility:

“I really don’t see why I should have to – yet again – produce a reading list that goes somewhere else. I want to make just one list, for *my* use, and let other agencies do whatever manipulation they need to use it for *their* purposes. Why should I have to do it for them?”

Many expressed outrage that after fulfilling their professional responsibility of list creation – which could not be done by anyone else – they should have to make the clerical effort to reproduce the same information for other uses. They did not regard it as their job.

It cannot be said that any of the lecturers disagreed. None voiced an eagerness to “do the donkey work” and all agreed that they should have to produce only one list. Those whose behaviour has been interpreted as accepting ownership of their online lists, however, put forward some arguments to support their use. Their contributions were not a robust defence of the existing reading list system, but did point out its potential development to actually reduce lecturer clerical responsibilities by:

- Making lists easier to construct, e.g. enabling items to be added to lists directly from OPAC searches;
- Developing additional functionality to support further list uses, e.g. a function that would amalgamate specified list items for all required course modules at a specified level to be used by Programme Directors and Admissions Tutors in response to student and prospective student requests for advance information;
- Providing other reading list stakeholders with the ability to pursue their legitimate uses of reading list information *without requiring lecturer intervention*.

This last point provoked full participation in lecturer focus groups. It emerged that many lecturers regarded reading list demands from the Bookshop to be a particular irritant. A few expressed confusion as to their obligations regarding Bookshop requirements, and all agreed that removing Lecturers from the Bookshop’s mailing list would be most welcome.

The Library was also criticised for demanding lecturer help in LORLS administration. Many voiced annoyance at receiving requests to update information on modules that were no longer running or had been transferred to other academics. They expressed the view that they should not be made responsible for providing information that was already available on the University Intranet. The Library was not singled out as the only offender in this respect. Mention was made that administration staff from other University departments often requested the readily available information, sometimes for the same information on more than one occasion. There was some dissent about the availability of up-to-date information, but the general opinion was that, "...we shouldn't have to do more so that everyone else can do less."

Librarian discussion on the topic indicated a reluctance to accept additional reading list responsibilities despite concerns about lecturer cooperation. Instead they, like some lecturers, looked to system development to make LORLS' use more attractive. Reading list creation, librarians reasoned, is a Lecturer responsibility. If lecturers could be persuaded to create master lists on LORLS to serve all purposes, the problem of multiple list production would be solved. None of the librarians considered the Library should take responsibility for entering lists on the system when they could be created there in the first place. Assuming responsibility for providing lecturers with added benefits, such as routine notification of new edition availability, was rejected by some librarians as too time consuming to maintain – unless system improvements could streamline the process.

5.6 Library Liaison

Discussion of how LORLS might affect Library Liaison Officer (LLO) responsibilities revealed differing perceptions regarding the LLO's role and value. Librarians spoke mainly of LLO involvement in materials selection processes. Lecturers referred more to the LLO's function as a channel for communication between the Library and the academic departments.

5.6.1 The Library View

In describing the role of LLOs, one librarian identified that LLOs are expected to act as ambassadors representing both Departmental interests to the Library and Library interests to each Department. Although, "They are meant to be the main communication tool", librarians reported that their value in this role varied widely between individual LLOs. Some related receiving useful help and advice from LLOs regarding specialised subject areas of interest for Library support. Others spoke of experiences with LLOs either having delayed submission of lecturer order requests or having been ineffective in soliciting additional orders from lecturers when Library book funds needed to be spent. In some cases librarians advocated cutting LLOs out of the loop by emailing Departmental lecturer lists directly. In this context, the reading list system was welcomed as providing a useful tool for direct

Library interaction with lecturers. One librarian added that contact and conversation with lecturing staff – not necessarily LLOs – provided valuable information that would not otherwise find its way to librarians through formal communication channels.

5.6.2 The Lecturers' Views

Lecturers' immediate responses to the question of the Library Liaison Officer's role were revealing:

- “He hatchets the journal subscriptions!”
- “He tries to spend the budget.”
- “He provides a single point of contact for forwarding e-mails from the Library and such.”

As the discussions developed, lecturers agreed that the LLO served as a “conduit of communication”, but the communications cited were overwhelmingly concerned with Library demands for lecturer action. When asked about communication of lecturer needs, the forwarding of orders to the Library was identified. One lecturer offered, “Well, they [LLOs] also sit on the Users' Committee... I think?” A former LLO confirmed that this was the case, and mentioned that the LLO job rotated regularly around the Department's lecturers, with new lecturers being nominated for the position as soon as possible. Another lecturer questioned:

- “Do you think there's actually a *need* for LLOs? I couldn't actually tell you who the one in my Department is, and I haven't noticed any problems getting what I need in the Library. Maybe they have other uses, but for getting books, I just let the Library know.”

One current LLO did make a case for the role's value. He spoke of working successfully with the Library over a period of several years to improve student end of module evaluations with regard to resource availability. Several lecturers responded that the Library question on the evaluation didn't apply to their modules, but students still answered it negatively because they had not used the Library. Undeterred, the LLO insisted that problems could be addressed if, he maintained, LLOs were supported by their colleagues:

- “That's the crucial bit! You *have* to talk to your Library Liaison if you want to get anything done.”

5.7 Benefits and Beneficiaries

Perceptions of the benefits to be gained from LORLS were examined for clues to differing levels of participant engagement with the system.

5.7.1 What we get

Librarians identified benefits for themselves, lecturers, and students. One mentioned that lecturer reading list submissions had more than doubled as a result of LORLS. Although this increased processing workload, it also increased acquisitions of recommended works, which benefited students. Some librarians valued the system for establishing direct lines of communication between lecturers and Library teams at an operational level. Most Librarians considered the system could be of great benefit to lecturers in eliminating the need to maintain multiple lists.

Lecturers spoke of benefits for the Library and for students. Some singled out rapid Library response in ordering listed items as a major benefit:

“I see that as the main point of the system. You know, if I were just doing it to make my reading list available on the Web to students when it was already available on paper, then I don’t think I would bother.”

Other lecturers suggested that the online lists themselves benefited students:

- “Everything that’s online makes life easier for students.”
- “Links to resources encourage students to actually retrieve them.”
- “Students can immediately see if there are any copies available and, if not, reserve copies.”

Interestingly, no lecturer initially identified any direct benefits for themselves in using LORLS to date. When pressed on the point, they came up with a few:

- “We don’t have to repeat to students over and over again what they should read.”
- “The electronic list is always available, even off campus. A paper list easily gets lost.”
- “Because the Library updates its system, it updates the reading list.”

No mention was made of eliminating the need for multiple lists, which librarians had seen as a major lecturer benefit. This perception that LORLS returns little benefit directly to lecturers may explain some less than willing engagement with the system.

5.7.2 What we want

Lecturers were asked what could be offered that would benefit lecturers using LORLS. Their responses ranged from provision of reading list related information to influence over their online lists:

- Routine notification of availability of new editions of reading list works;
- Use information for reading list works;
- Use information for online lists;
- More control over list and record format without foregoing ease of use;
- Feedback on lecturer input.

Edition and use information for reading list works could be used to keep the lists up-to-date and the lecturer informed of his/her recommended resource demand and availability. Statistics of the electronic reading list accesses would help measure student, as opposed to Library, use of the system, which is information that interests lecturers who believe the system is primarily for the Library's benefit. Many lecturers resented having no recourse but to fall in line with the Library's dictates on how their recommendations would be presented online, although one lecturer spoke of having a good response to his suggestions to the Library Systems Team. The others admitted having no contact with Systems. Finally, lecturers complained that communications from the Library consisted mostly of demands, and said they would like to have feedback on actions taken in response to their individual input. One lecturer commented on the Reading List Update e-mail:

“You wonder if it does any good... if you reply to them – these automated things – hoping that something will be fixed and, of course, there's nobody actually sitting at the end of it. It's a black hole!”

These identified desired benefits all relate to lecturer inclusion. They want to get as well as give, they want a say in the proceedings and they want to know what is going on. It may be that perceived lack of reward, influence and information deter lecturers from becoming active partners in LORLS.

5.8 Information and Communication

Some lecturer disaffection with LORLS possibly results from issues of incorrect or inadequate information and lack of communication. This cannot be ascertained from the conduct of just two lecturer focus groups, but many instances of information shortfalls were identified that were common to both groups.

5.8.1 Who asked for it?

Many lecturers expressed the opinion that the electronic reading list system had been imposed upon them. Upon learning that the Learning and Teaching Committee had approached the Library to participate in developing the system, immediate reactions from each group were:

“Yes, but they undoubtedly asked, ‘Can the Library do this?’
Not, ‘Will all the lecturers now have to do an extra job?’”

and

“Yeah, but how many reading lists are *they* likely to enter?
Not their problem, is it?”

Further discussion indicated that lecturers did not feel that they had been consulted about the impact on them of the move to online lists. They felt that decisions had been made at the top with small regard for the people most affected at the bottom.

5.8.2 Just what is it?

Some lecturers spoke of uncertainty over the demands of various e-projects:

“... the push to get everything on LEARN, so a reading list gets posted there. And a list had to be put on the Module Specifications, but then they limited that to three items. And then you had to do it separately on the electronic reading list.”

A few lecturers thought that they were still limited to three items for their “online list” that was now on LORLS. Piece meal e-initiatives seemed to increase, and sometimes confuse, some lecturers’ perceptions of reading list demands.

5.8.3 How does it work?

Lecturers did not seem well acquainted with the reading list system. Many were unfamiliar with basic Note entries for annotating lists or did not realise that the lists could link directly to electronic resources as well as to the Library Catalogue. This surprised those lecturers described as willing online list owners, who suggested greater promotion and instruction was needed. Others countered with claims that they did not use the system often enough to become adept at it, and that training was too lengthy or too inconvenient to be justified by their minimal use.

Nor was there a clear understanding of how their recommendations translated into Library provision of resources. No lecturer could confidently state how flagging list items as ‘Recommended to Purchase’ or ‘Key Text’ might relate to acquisition of multiple copies, though some recalled there being a formula relating to numbers of students on modules. They felt that information on Library policy was lacking.

5.8.4 Who needs it?

Lecturers also expressed confusion about their obligation to provide reading list information to the Bookshop. Some recalled a rumour that the Library had been going to take care of that, but request letters kept coming from the Bookshop.

An interview with the Systems Team Leader established that the Bookshop had actually paid the Library to develop software for providing the Bookshop with regular, electronic reports on reading list updates. The Library agreed to provide the information on the understanding that the Bookshop would not chase lecturers for it, but this understanding was not recorded. Reports were sent to an e-mail address through the Bookshop's central office. The e-mail address was supplied by the Bookshop manager at the time, who confirmed that the information was regularly received and satisfactory.

A follow-up interview with the current Bookshop manager revealed that there had been several changes of manager since the agreement had been made with the Library. At some point the knowledge of the Library agreement had been lost, and the e-mails ceased to be retrieved. The e-mail address was given to the manager by this researcher, but by the time of writing the managers had changed again and a new round of Bookshop requests sent to lecturers.

5.8.5 Who knows?

Access to information held within the University is an issue that affects the Library and lecturers in connection with LORLS. Most lecturers cannot understand why they are asked to provide module administration information, such as assigned Internal Examiners, that is freely available from the CIS Catalogue of Modules, but librarians relate problems with both late publication and obsolete information from this source. Librarians would like prior information on module assignments that will create high-demand topics, but lecturers are unwilling to supply it because it is available on LEARN, although not in any structured, retrievable format. Lecturers claim they are asked to find and forward information held within the University fairly often, and resent the clerical role. The need to access internal information through lecturers is a source of some friction.

5.8.6 What does it matter?

Indications are that neither lecturers nor librarians are reliably receiving the information they want or need. That and communication shortfalls may underlie lecturer reluctance to fully engage with and support LORLS. Perceptions of having multiple e-information initiatives imposed on them with little consultation or consideration seems to have created some resentment and confusion. Lack of system manipulation knowledge limits lecturer ability to create reading lists as they would desire, and inadequate information on Library policy means lecturers are unsure of the impact that their recommendations may have on

resource availability. Requests that lecturers assume clerical responsibilities for repackaging and redirecting reading lists and other information held on University systems seem to have been particular irritants. Responsibility for much of this may be beyond Library control, but its effect on lecturer engagement with LORLS must be considered.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Possibilities and Problems

Academic reading lists have potential for greater use as Library resource management tools. Extending Library use of online reading lists to permit focused examination of recommended reading collection utility is a possibility, and could be further explored. The availability of reading lists for Library use is, however, affected by the existence of barriers to willing lecturer participation in providing lists to the online reading list system. Analysis suggests that lecturers perceive the Library/lecturer partnership in LORLS imbalanced to favour Library objectives at lecturers' expense.

6.2 Available Reading List Information

This research into the value of reading lists in the academic community confirmed that academic reading lists could be used in association with related resource data held on Library computer systems to generate potentially useful collection management information. Data retrieved on reading lists works over four academic years was manipulated to extract information on the use of the recommended reading collection. Harvested information was used to:

- Produce visual representations of the shape (i.e. distribution and frequency of works) and take-up of recommended reading collections. These allow evaluation of general currency and utility of the reading list collection and any identifiable subset, which may be useful evidence when liaising with Departments over module feedback.
- Produce visual representations of established circulation trends and anomalies. These allow identification and investigation of possible problems.
- Identify works by circulation levels in designated reading list sectors. This can be used to inform possible additional copy or topic support acquisitions.
- Identify unloaned works in any designated reading list sector to assist in targeting Library liaison with lecturers for support of taught-course modules.

The value of databasing reading list system data in conjunction with circulation system data lies in the ability to manipulate data to examine the collection's utility in serving any identifiable segment of the Library's taught-course market. There is precedent for accepting circulation as a valid measurement of use for taught-course materials (Hart *et al.* 1986) (Payne 1986) and for extracting collection management information from circulation data (Day & Revill 1995) (Crotts 1999). Information gained in this way has potential for targeted collection management and academic support, and might be used as evidence of effective integration of Library service into the University's teaching mission – one of the factors identified by Follett as a desirable performance indicator (Follett 1993, p.81).

Further research into academic and Library use of reading lists on LORLS, however, found that many lecturers have reservations about supporting the online reading list system. Reading lists define recommended reading collections. Barriers to lecturer commitment in contributing reading lists to LORLS can degrade the Library's ability to provide taught-course collections that are responsive to course curricula.

6.3 Barriers to Use of LORLS

Analysis of focus group data suggests there is some lecturer perception of inequity and imbalance in their partnership with the Library for provision of reading lists on LORLS. They feel they are required to put in a disproportionate effort toward making the system work, and that this involves assuming responsibility for tasks that the technology had shifted away from Library clerical staff. Repeated requests from community members that lecturers supply readily available information for other departments' administration purposes are perceived as yet more clerical work that should not properly fall to them. The online reading list initiative is seen as being Library driven and controlled. Little direct benefit is recognised by lecturers, and little appreciation evident to them of their central role as academics. Perception that their work schedules and reading list use should be subordinated to Library needs and demands provoked outrage in some lecturers. Some have expressed that it makes them feel more like LORLS support staff than valued Library partners.

The described lecturer perceptions relate to some of the critical success factors for partnership identified by Wildridge (2004). Some lecturers seemed not to consider the collaboration as in their self-interest and did not appear to share a stake in what was regarded as a Library system. The Library, as the controlling partner, was seen to accrue more benefit and the lecturers to incur more of the costs. Communication was perceived to be largely one-way and consisted primarily of notification of Library demands on lecturer time and effort. Clear roles and policy guidelines in reading list provision were felt by lecturers to be lacking, as was an understanding and respect for lecturers' agendas.

Lecturer perceptions may be just that – perceptions – as may be Library perceptions. Lecturers felt that they were not consulted about the development of the system, yet the Systems team felt their efforts to solicit lecturer views by hosting two system trials in the Library during development were not taken up by lecturers. Library staff feel that the Library is supporting lecturers by providing a method whereby all reading list use can be realised through one master list, as suggested by Follett (1993, p.38), but lecturers feel the Library is adding to their workload. Perceptions, even if unfounded, affect relationships and cannot be ignored. Information and communication shortfalls appear to contribute significantly to a mismatch of Library/lecturer perceptions of LORLS at operational level.

6.4 The Wider Context

Although recommendations will be made for possible Library approaches to addressing the identified barriers to lecturer engagement with LORLS at Loughborough, these are no more than suggested local strategies for what one library might be able to do to improve reading list provision. The problems with library/lecturer cooperation in the matter of recommended reading are not, however, a local issue and not confined to partnership in providing electronic reading list systems. Some of the Library/lecturer LORLS partnership problems stem from a larger issue – the need for cultural change to support educational learning strategies. Change in emphasis of course delivery to student-centred, resource-based learning means that libraries acting alone cannot guarantee delivery of appropriate resources. Librarians need proactive academic support and guidance to deliver effective, integrated, taught-course resource provision. Arguments for individual academic freedom may not be apposite to reading list provision in the current higher educational ethos. Driving recommended reading provision should be accepted as an integral part of academic teaching responsibility.

Chapter 7

Recommendations

7.1 Recommendation Foci

The recommendations resulting from this research focus on three areas – reading list collection use databasing, the Library/Academic LORLS partnership and University internal information access.

7.2 Reading List Collection Use Database

Further investigation of interest in and specific uses for information available from a reading list collection use database should be undertaken if developing one is considered. Information targeted for Academic Librarian module support use will differ in form and focus from information targeted for summary diagnostic use by senior management. Thought should be given to the form and frequency in which the information could be supplied. Given that some lecturers have identified feedback on demonstrated take up of their recommendations as a possible benefit of using LORLS, design of a report for reading list owners should be considered. In regard to the design of the database used for this research:

- Eliminate the ReadingListType field, as this would require lecturer input. Requests for further lecturer support for reading list initiatives would be counterproductive.
- Ascertain level of interest in information of reading list collection circulation performance by selector. If this is desired information, then an agreed and enforced format for data entry to that field must be sought.
- Consider what further information on taught-course resource use might be desired that would require design of further fields for data retrieval – a field holding classification numbers, for example, might be used to investigate levels of cross-Department recommendation for subject materials funded by individual Departments.

7.3 LORLS Partnership Issues

Steps could be taken to strengthen the Library/Academic partnership in LORLS provision. Effort should be directed to reduce perceptions of demands on lecturers, regularly include lecturers in reading list system development, and demonstrate Library support of and response to lecturer needs. The Library can strive to improve Library communications and visible support of lecturer use of LORLS. To this end, the following levels of action could be considered (listed in order of possible ease of implementation):

- Recommend routine lateral communication from Library staff be encouraged to keep lecturers informed of Library response to lecturer actions. Things such as acknowledgement of receipt of order requests and feedback of order status, or

acknowledgment of reading list updates and feedback of actions taken in response would be a fairly low cost method of demonstrating Library support in action.

- Recommend re-examining reading list communications. Timing of update e-mails appears to be an issue. Many lecturers are annoyed by the e-mail and delete it, but some librarians report increased reading list submissions in response. Alternative wording to request only that changes involving ordering additional stock would be appreciated might seem less demanding. Consider acknowledging that lecturers do not schedule their work around Library timetables, and ask when they would prefer to be contacted. Explain the time required for acquisitions and why. Explore the possibility of hiding reading list entries of books on order to avoid student demand for unavailable late recommendations – could the link that says [HELD] be altered to say [On Order] until books are available?
- Recommend re-examining the role of the Library Liaison Officer (LLO). Librarians report wide variance in quality of LLOs. Lecturers associate LLOs with journal cuts and demands for support in spending up bookfunds. Most lecturers seem to regard the job as professionally unrewarding and unpopular, so pass it on to another at the first opportunity. LLOs can make a difference – the one long-term LLO in the focus groups that spoke out for the job and advocated lecturer support of LLOs represented the Department that was identified in this research as having the lowest level of unloaned reading list works throughout the four years studied. What can the Library do for LLOs? How can the perception that they are simply Library enforcers communicating Library demands be altered?
- Recommend the Bookshop communication problem be addressed by senior management to establish and record a clear policy allocating responsibility for communication of reading list information. This should be distributed to all departments and the Bookshop regularly so that all parties are kept aware of it. Reading list update e-mails could have a line such as “Reading list updates on LORLS are automatically supplied to the Bookshop electronically.” Consider designing additional annual or semester reports for the Bookshop with information on high demand reading list works – and send by post in case e-mail goes astray again. This could remove a long-standing irritant while ensuring the Bookshop received the information it needs and regular reminders of its relationship with the Library.
- Recommend establishing policy on agreeing resource provision in response to reading list recommendations. This would have to be on a Department basis, given differing resources and demand, but lecturers and their Academic Librarians should have a mutual understanding of how the Library will normally respond to lecturer input to LORLS. A hard and fast policy is probably not desirable as the Library needs flexibility to manage its resources, but Departmental guidelines could be agreed and posted so that changing lecturer and LLO populations would be able to reference the information.
- Recommend exploring the perception held by some lecturers that the Library collection contains some dangerously outdated or inappropriately selected resources that should not be used by their students. Consider establishing a ‘Nominate to Relegate’ programme to give lecturers the opportunity to report works they feel should be removed. Nominations could be considered through normal weeding criteria and feedback sent to the nominator on results of the process. This could be contentious as lecturers may disagree on the value of resources, but it would flag up lecturer collection concerns and Library response to them.

- Recommend a consultation exercise be undertaken with lecturers, librarians and Systems staff in a concerted, inclusive effort to identify and agree ways in which LORLS might be developed to be more intuitive for lecturers to use. Making lecturers an intrinsic part of LORLS development would encourage them to regard it as their own, as well as the Library, system. It would also make a statement about the Library striving to give lecturers a system suited to them rather than obliging them to accept and adapt to whatever is offered.

7.4 University Issues

The Library cannot, by itself, correct communication and information shortfalls from other parts of the University, but it can influence University awareness of and attention to the problems:

- A focus group of reading list stakeholders to discuss the problems of internal information may help develop an understanding of the situation and of the problems faced by each partner. Inclusion of CIS (Corporate Information Services) would help clarify their issues with Module Specification data..
- Once the problems have been defined, thought should be given as to the proper forum in which they might be addressed. Lecturers have indicated that the Library is not the only Department routinely requesting administration information held on University systems, which indicates that access to internal information may be a University knowledge management issue.

7.5 Library Resource Implications

All of the recommendations carry resources implications, primarily for time – time needed to convene focus groups and analyse resultant data; time needed to establish policy with Departments and the Bookshop; time needed for staff to feedback routine actions to lecturers; time needed to explore alternative approaches. With both librarians and lecturers looking to software solutions to many perceived LORLS use barriers, there could be major time implications for the Library Systems Team. The prospect of developing a reading list collection use database would make further demands on the Systems Team schedule. Time has been identified in the focus groups as an issue for all parties, but there is no quick fix. Strengthening the Library/Academic LORLS partnership would take time.

7.6 Further Considerations

All recommendations offered are based on the data collected from this research project. Consideration should be given to the limited size and focused nature of the research before acting on any recommendation made. Social Sciences and Humanities Faculty reading list collections may present particular problems that librarians may wish to explore, but that have not been considered in this examination of Science Faculty reading list works – how circulation is affected by the position of works in their very long lists, for example. It is

possible that the participants who volunteered for the lecturer focus groups are not representative of the wider population – there were only two lecturer focus groups conducted and they were limited to lecturers from the Science Faculty. Engineering Faculty lecturers may all be well satisfied with LORLS since they generally have very short lists that require small effort to maintain. LORLS has succeeded in representing at least 80% of Loughborough University’s reading lists online – a much higher rate of Library acquisition of reading lists than is reported anywhere in the literature – and its success should not be discounted. LORLS serves the Library well, but the Library may not be seen as serving some of its most important customers – the lecturers who create the lists LORLS is based on – quite so well. The perception of some lecturers that they are being relegated from an academic proactive role to a clerical reactive role in the LORLS partnership should be addressed.

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Appendix A

RL-Use Database Tables – field specifications and data requirements
(Database design diagram reprinted for referencing, p.62)

AA1 The LIST Table

Fields in the **LIST** table were selected to allow identification and selection of reading lists grouped by various factors. The primary key field (needed to uniquely identify each record), called ReadingListCode, borrowed an existing LORLS designation that used a concatenation of academic year and module code (e.g. 05ISB201) taken from the University Catalogue of Modules. This uniquely identified the list for any given module in any given year and had the advantage of being a familiar designation. Although department, academic year and level of study could be deduced from this primary key, separate fields for these data were included to facilitate manipulation of the records when constructing queries. A field for number of students registered for each module represented by a reading list was included to measure potential demand for the recommended resources generated by each list. Reading list owner and title fields were included to facilitate identification of lists and feedback on resource use. A field for type of reading list had been included to indicate lecturers' expectations of student use of the lists. This had been intended to explore any effect list length and complexity may have on listed resource circulation. It proved too difficult to assess and format this, however, without lecturer input as to how they promoted use of their lists to their students. The ReadingListType field was not used in this study, but was left in place for possible future use in collaboration with list owners.

AA2 The RL-WORK Table

Fields chosen for the **RL-WORK** table described each recommended resource. The primary key of this and all other tables in the database, apart from the **LIST** table, were incremental numbers without any intrinsic meaning that were generated by the database for each record as it was created to ensure it could be uniquely identified. The ControlNumber field used either recognised standard publication identification numbers (e.g. ISBN/ISSN) or the local system numbers generated by the Library Management System for works listed in the library catalogue. An entry in the ControlNumber field was not required for every record, because LORLS permits inclusion of non-catalogued resources on reading lists, but was relevant to this study of the *circulation* of reading list resources. Binary condition fields (yes/no) were then included to indicate if a resource was loanable or included a URL to account for lack of circulation data not necessarily due to lack of use – reference books may be recommended but can not be borrowed and use of electronic resources through the reading lists could not be quantified for this project. Although use of such resources could not be measured in this project, data on numbers of recommendations for these might be useful for estimating potential demand. Included in addition to traditional bibliographic fields (author,

title, edition, year of publication), was a field for date acquired/catalogued to measure length of time each resource was available from the collection. Binary condition fields had also been included to indicate if previous and/or subsequent editions of recommended titles were held to investigate possible related usage, but this information proved difficult to retrieve reliably. Finally, data quality issues prevented use of a selector field to compare usage of librarian versus faculty selections – the manner in which this data had been recorded had changed when the LMS was changed, and the information had never been consistently formatted for retrieval.

AA3 The LIST-WORK-LINK Table

The **LIST-WORK-LINK** table was created to associate individual works with reading lists that recommended them. This was accomplished by including the primary key fields from **RL-WORK** and **LIST** tables (i.e. WorkId and ReadingListCode) in the **LIST-WORK-LINK** table. Two additional binary condition (Yes/No) fields were included to flag works as key texts or recommended for student purchase for particular reading lists. These were included to explore how strength of lecturer recommendation might relate to circulation of reading list items.

AA4 The DEMAND Table

The fields of the **DEMAND** table were selected to allow retrieval of circulation statistics for reading list resources by loan category and designated date ranges. Retrieval by loan category proved impossible to implement because loan categories were not fixed values, and historical values were not recorded in the archived data. The data for this project was retrieved for each semester of the academic years 2000-2004, but the fields were constructed so that the date parameters could be changed as required for future research. A field for number of holds (reservations) placed on items already on loan was included to measure unsatisfied demand at time of request.

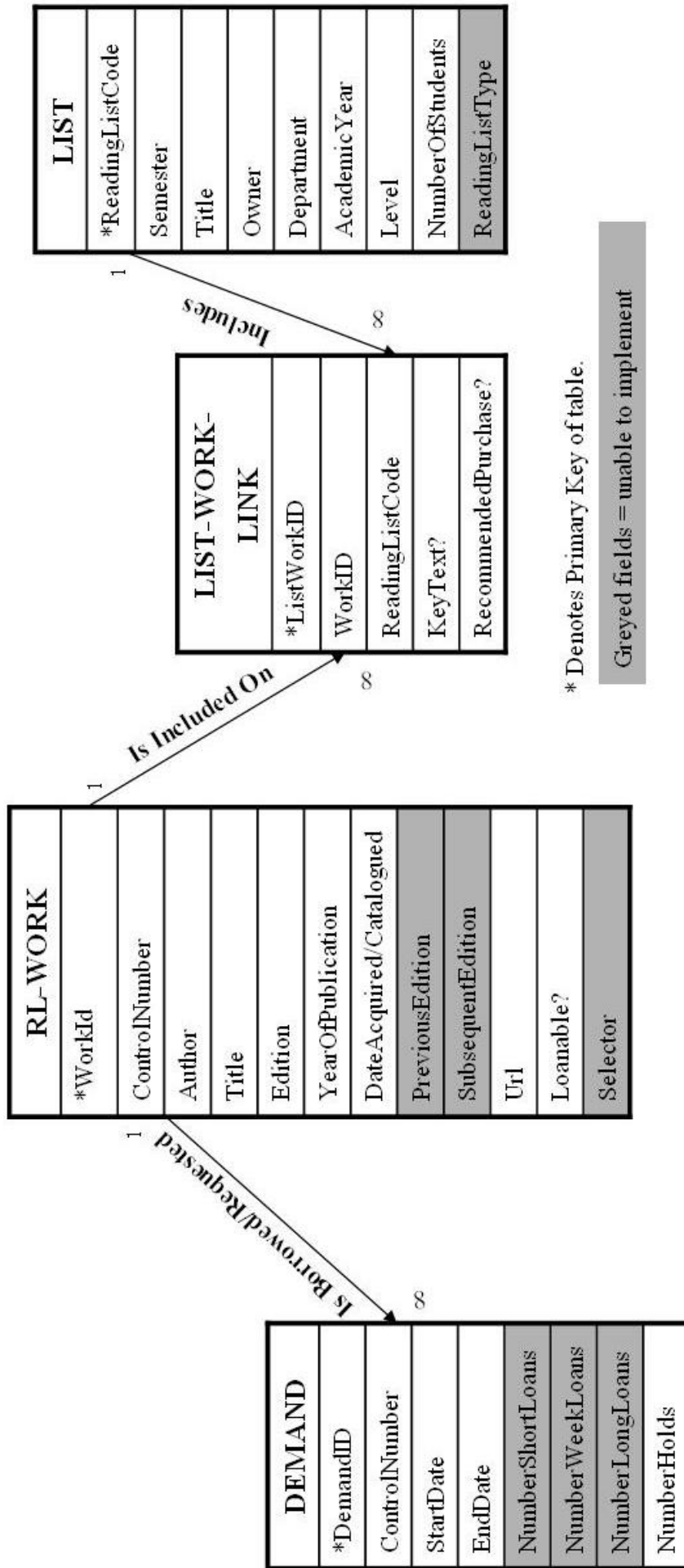


Figure 3A: ReadingList-Use Database

Appendix B

Questions to be answered by the RL-Use Database

1. How many distinct, loanable Science Faculty reading list works exist for each academic year 2001-2004?
2. How many of these were not borrowed in each year? How many never borrowed during a specified span of years? Which ones?
3. How many are borrowed 'n' or more times (values of 'n' to be set as required) in each year studied? Which ones?
4. How many Science Faculty Key Texts answer Questions 1-3? Recommended to Purchase? How many answer Questions 1-3? Which ones?
5. How many Short-Loan Science Faculty reading list works answer Questions 1-3? Week-Loan? Long-Loan? Which ones? **[n.b. unable to implement as data not archived]**
6. How many Science Faculty reading list works are on multiple reading lists in the same academic year? Same semester? How many are recommended to 'x' or more students (values of 'x' to be set as required) at these times? How many answer Questions 1-3? Which ones?
7. How many loanable Science Faculty reading list works have previous editions in the Library collection? Subsequent editions? On the same reading list? On other reading lists? How many of each answer Questions 1-3? Which ones? **[n.b. unable to implement as data not uniformly formatted]**
8. How many Science Faculty reading list works published in year 'yyyy' (year to be set as required) answer Questions 1-3? Which ones?
9. How many Science Faculty reading list works acquired/catalogued in year 'yyyy' (year to be set as required) answer Questions 1-3? Which ones?
10. How many Science Faculty reading list works were originally selected for acquisition by Library staff? By academic staff? By others? How many answer Questions 1-3? Which ones? **[n.b. unable to implement as data not uniformly formatted]**
11. How many Science Faculty reading list works are non-loanable (Reference or Serial) for each year studied? Which ones?
12. How many Science Faculty reading list works have electronic links (URLs) in addition to OPAC links for each year studied? Only non-OPAC links? Which ones?
13. How many distinct reading list works are on a particular Science Faculty reading list?
14. How many distinct Science Faculty reading list works are not held in the collection for each year studied? Which ones?
15. All of the above Questions, subdivided or retrieved by either Department, Course, Module, Lecturer or Year Level separately or in combination.

Note: Not all of the above questions were intended for use in this initial exploration to identify possible management information to be gained from electronic association of lecturer reading recommendations with Library held system data on the recommended works. The more focused questions were included to allow scope for further Library research.

Appendix C

Questions for focus groups.

- Please, would you tell us who you are, what you do in your department, and about your involvement with reading lists?
- In this age of Google and freely available on-line information, how important are Library provided resources to the University's mission of teaching and learning?
- How do you rate Library provision of material in your subject area and how does this affect reading recommendations?
- How do you use the lists?
- How do others use the lists?
- What demands does reading list provision through LORLS make on you?
- What benefits result from LORLS?
- What is the role of LLOs (Library Liaison Officers) in your departments and how is that affected by LORLS?
- Have I left anything out? Are there any issues you think we should have addressed that could be raised in future discussions?