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National policy on libraries at a time of convergence: the Uk experience

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Abstract:

The United Kingdom does not have a formal overarching national information and library policy. Nevertheless there may be some interest in what we do as a country which does not have such a policy – and the role of the national library in this - particularly at a time of digital/analogue convergence. The presentation will start by describing the landscape of library provision in the UK and its governance, funding, and policy framework. It will then go on to review recent developments at regulatory, policy and practical levels. These include: developments in open access (including the Access to Research initiative), reviews of the future of public libraries including e-lending, and the national role of the British Library in, for example, e-legal deposit, the national roll-out of Business and IP centres, and in providing national underpinning for a national distributed collection.

Introduction

The United Kingdom does not have a formal overarching national information and information policy. Nevertheless there may be some interest in what we do as a country which does not have such a policy – and the role of the national library in this - particularly at a time of digital/analogue convergence. The picture that emerges is one of complexity created by the absence of a clear, centralised policy framework, and where the onus is on the libraries themselves to collaborate both within and across sectors to ensure that a sensible joined up system operates.

Policy oversight for and funding of libraries in the UK

There is no single body within government responsible for all library development within the UK to facilitate the formulation of a truly national library policy. Government policy oversight and funding for libraries in the UK is highly fragmented and additionally complicated by the fact that culture and education under the UK's constitutional framework are both devolved matters (devolved to the administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), while research is not. The following section of the paper maps out the landscape of library provision in the UK. For the purpose of the paper, where appropriate, the focus is

mainly on the situation in England rather than describing the individual position in each of the devolved administrations.

Public libraries

The key piece of legislation for public libraries in England - the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964¹ – sets out a statutory duty for all local authorities *to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service*, set in the context of local need: that is, specifically of those who live, work and study in the local area. Thus, in England, 151 local authorities run their own public library services. Responsibility for the oversight of local authorities in England themselves rests with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). However, the 1964 Act also imposes a duty on the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport *to oversee and to promote* the public library service. He also has the duty of ensuring the proper discharge by local authorities of their functions in relation to public libraries and he is granted powers under the Act to take action where a local authority is in breach of its own duty. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) funds Arts Council England (ACE)² which provides support to local library services. Its role essentially relates to the “promote” duty under the Act (whereas the “oversight” duty falls to the DCMS and the Secretary of State himself). Thus ACE is “the development agency for public libraries in England”, and the location of this responsibility in ACE gives public libraries the opportunity to be part of the wider cultural framework as part of the portfolio of ACE (with its responsibilities for arts and museums).

University libraries

Universities in England come under the policy oversight of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS). BIS is the department for economic growth; it invests in skills and education and in research, development and innovation to promote trade, boost innovation and help people to start and grow a business. The Higher Education Funding Councils³ distribute public money for teaching and research to the universities and colleges. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), operates at arms’ length from BIS and allocates Government funding to the English universities and colleges.

Government research funding is administered by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills and is allocated by the seven Research Councils⁴ that come under the strategic partnership umbrella of Research Councils UK. Each year the Research Councils invest around £3 billion in research covering the full spectrum of academic disciplines from the medical and biological sciences to astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences and the arts and humanities. All UK Higher

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>

² <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/>

³ Higher Education Funding Council for England, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland, Scottish Funding Council

⁴ The seven UK Research Councils are: Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC); Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC); Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC); Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC); Medical Research Council (MRC); Natural Environment Research Council (NERC); Science & Technology Facilities Council (STFC).

Education Institutions that receive grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies are eligible to receive funds for research, postgraduate training and associated activities. (Under the so-called ‘dual support system’, the Research Councils provide grants for specific projects and programmes, while the UK’s Higher Education Funding Councils provide block grant funding to support the research infrastructure and to enable institutions to undertake ground-breaking research of their own choosing). Other independent research organisations (IROs) may also be eligible to receive funds from the Research Councils if they possess an existing in-house capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national research base, are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes, and satisfy other criteria related to their financial and legal status. The British Library is recognised as an IRO (as are other national museums and galleries) by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and this enables the BL to partner and collaborate in Research Council-funded programmes. JISC⁵ (the Joint Information Systems Committee) programmes have had significant impact on the development of the UK academic libraries and have been a major catalyst for culture change.

National libraries

The British Library is the national library for the United Kingdom. It is funded, as are the national museums and galleries, from the vote of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The British Library Act of 1972⁶ charges the British Library Board with managing the Library as “...a national centre for reference, study and bibliographical and other information services, in relation both to scientific and technological matters and to the humanities” and with making its services available “... in particular to institutions of education and learning, other libraries and industry”.

I believe it is not insignificant that the British Library was established during a period in which Government responsibility for libraries and information provision was - crucially - concentrated in one ministry (i.e. the Department for Education and Science) and also at a time when other related national policies (i.e. education, research and technological development) were seen as national strategic imperatives. There was at that time both recognition of the importance of library services to the nation and of the advantages of moving towards a coherent system (‘a well-ordered pattern of complementary and co-operating parts’ as the Dainton Committee put it) but also the levers were readily available to bring the component parts of the new institution within a unified administrative framework and to ensure integrated planning and common forward policies. For this short period of time the conditions were right to enable national strategic library development, and the creation of the British Library was the result. However, as a result of successive ‘mechanics of Government’ changes subsequently, these conditions have not pertained since.

The British Library’s users and potential users come from diverse backgrounds, span all disciplines, and have varied needs. The BL focuses on five key audiences:

- Researchers – those doing research for academic, commercial or personal reasons

⁵ <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/content>

⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/54/contents>

- Business – all types of commercial ventures from individual entrepreneurs and SMEs (small- and medium-sized enterprises) to multi-national corporations
- Education – educators and learners ranging from school-children to life-long learners
- General public – all members of the public
- Library and information network – libraries and other information-focused organisations.

Thus, as a world-class cultural institution with a vital role as holder of the national memory, the British Library makes an important contribution to DCMS's key policy agendas. But it is also a critical resource for UK research, an integral component of the national research infrastructure and it plays a correspondingly significant role in ensuring the research excellence of the UK, and it underpins business and enterprise through its contribution to knowledge transfer, creativity and innovation, and in these respects it also significantly supports the policy objectives of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS).

In Scotland, the National Library of Scotland comes under the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs in the Scottish Government. In Wales, the National Library of Wales comes under the oversight of the Minister for Natural Resources, Culture and Sport in the Welsh Government. The UK has an asymmetric model of devolution. Unlike a federal system, where states or provinces share sovereignty with the centre and have comparable powers with each other, the devolved arrangements in the UK differ sharply between territories and the situation is changing rapidly, not least with the **referendum on whether Scotland should be an independent country** to take place on Thursday 18 September 2014. The devolved administrations are developing differently in their approaches to libraries too. For example, Wales has a more joined up library policy approach led by the Assembly in Cardiff. [Libraries Inspire: The strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-16](#)⁷ sets out a strategic framework for public, academic, educational and workplace libraries at local, regional and national level.

Thus, in short, Government policy responsibility for libraries in the UK is distributed across both the Culture and Business Departments in Whitehall and also across the devolved administrations. There is no body within government responsible for all library development within the UK to facilitate the formulation of a truly national library policy.

A pragmatic collaborative response

The absence of a unitary governance, policy and funding structure within Government for provision places a greater onus on the libraries themselves to collaborate both within and across sectors (and also in the case of the research libraries, across the borders of the devolved administrations).

Higher education and research libraries

There is a complete absence of both central policy towards, and also coordination of, university libraries in the UK. And this means that a great deal of collaboration is required to

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<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/libraries/librariesinspire/?lang=en>

ensure that a sensible joined-up system operates. The focus tends to be on ‘single idea’ initiatives as these are easier to build a community consensus around.

Research Libraries UK and COPAC

Research Libraries UK (RLUK) is a membership body that represents 34 of the leading and most significant research libraries⁸ in the UK and Ireland. Collaborative solutions developed under RLUK auspices include COPAC, a traditional library union catalogue containing some 40 million records representing the merged holdings of RLUK member institutions, including the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Wales, and the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, plus special collections from a number of non-RLUK libraries. Under RLUK’s current strategic plan, members are working collaboratively on five strategic themes. These are: redefining the research library model; collaborating to reduce costs and improve quality; shaping ethical and effective publishing; promoting unique and distinctive collections; and modelling the library role in research data management. RLUK also works with SCUNUL (the Society of College, National and University Libraries which represents all university libraries in the UK and Ireland, irrespective of mission group, as well as national libraries and many of the UK’s colleges of higher education) to coordinate HEI library responses to issues such as changes in Government policy (e.g. open access), proposed publisher price increases, etc.

UKRR

The UK Research Reserve (UKRR) is a collaborative distributed national research collection managed by a partnership between the Higher Education sector and the British Library. It allows Higher Education libraries to de-duplicate their journal holdings of a title if two copies are held by other UKRR members, ensuring continued access to low-use journals, while allowing libraries to release space to meet the changing needs of their users. With funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), it has the target of releasing 100 km of shelf space by 2015 and to date has achieved £37m in savings through eliminating the need for duplicated storage in the system.

EThOS

EThOS (Electronic Theses Online Service) is the national aggregation service for UK PhD theses, provided by the British Library. It aims to transform the visibility and availability of this previously rarely-used resource: it demonstrates the quality of UK research, and supports the UK Government’s open access principle (see below) that publications resulting from publicly-funded research should be made freely available for all researchers, providing opportunities for further research. Currently EThOS contains 350,000 records relating to theses awarded by over 120 institutions; around 120,000 of these also provide access to the full text thesis, either via download from the EThOS database or via links to the institution’s own repository. Of the remaining 250,000 records dating back to at least 1800, three quarters are available to be ordered for scanning through the EThOS digitisation-on-demand facility.

Public libraries

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) is a membership group made up of the head of service of every public library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and its stated goal is to advocate for continuous improvement of the public library service on behalf of local

⁸ University libraries, the British Library, the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales, the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Wellcome Library

people. A key achievement of SCL has been the development of the “Universal Offers”, four key areas of service seen as essential to a 21st century library service and a shared strategy for the future. The Universal Offers are: the Reading Offer; Information Offer; Digital Offer; and the Health Offer. The aim of each of the offers is to develop a core package of partnerships, resources and advocacy messages at a national level which can then be delivered locally and shaped to meet differing local needs. They reflect the fact that the public library is a national brand and some elements of it can be delivered more effectively on a national scale. They provide a positive vision for the future of public libraries; they represent a promise to public library customers and a commitment to quality provision, accessible to all, across these four core areas. They enable costs and resources to be shared, and they provide value for money by ensuring that energy and funds are not duplicated in developing individual offers/schemes across the 151 individual library authorities. They are also a powerful advocacy tool for Heads of Service to use within their own local authority when making the case for libraries and evidencing the difference that they can make to communities.

The role of national libraries

Research undertaken as part of the Research Support Libraries Group (RSLG) project in 2002 underlined the critical importance of the British Library’s reference and document supply collections in underpinning the resources of the libraries of the higher education institutions of the UK. When the budgets for acquisitions in UK institutions were ranked against those in the United States, the BL’s acquisitions spend was found to be on a par with the best US research collections at Harvard and Yale. However, the highest ranking UK institutions not in receipt of legal deposit (Manchester, John Rylands) was ranked at 83th place and, more significantly, the last 85 places out of 221 were taken up by UK universities. The RSLG report⁹ observed:

“Researchers gain access to external hard copy resources in two ways: remotely via inter-library loan or document supply; and directly by visiting other institutions in person. Inter-library loan and document supply in the UK is deeply entrenched and effective..... The resources of the British Library are, we believe, one of the main reasons why UK universities are able to match, and in many cases exceed, the quality and scale of research undertaken within similar sized universities in other parts of the world. Comparisons with North American universities, for example, show that only three UK libraries – the British Library and the university libraries at Oxford and Cambridge – acquire material on a scale comparable with the leading North American private or state universities. A large research intensive university in the UK typically acquires some 10,000 serials annually along with some 30,000 monographs – respectively about a quarter and a half of what the main Carnegie Research 1 universities in the USA, with which they would wish to be compared in the breadth and quality of their research, acquire”.

Since then the information world has continued to change rapidly. Technology has improved, user expectations have increased, and publisher business models have changed. And as described later in this paper, we have seen the move to open access and the enactment of regulations extending legal deposit to electronic publications. At the BL our current Content

⁹ <http://www.rslg.ac.uk/final/final.pdf>

Strategy, From stored knowledge to smart knowledge¹⁰, has responded to the unprecedented scale of these changes and has adopted a number of key principles, the most relevant of which in this context are:

- The UK's publications received through Legal Deposit will underpin content development
- We will select content in terms of its research value
- Connecting to content will become more important
- We will continue to invest in heritage materials
- We will conduct a strategic review of the acquisitions budget (in the context of changing levels of provision in the UK HE and public library sectors)
- The Library will continue to make the print-to-digital transition
- We will add value to content through curation and encourage our users to add value through community
- The Library will develop a "without walls" approach to access

Significant recent national developments at policy and practical level

Sieghart Reviews I and II, and British Library involvement

In February 2014, the Culture Department and the Department for Communities and Local Government announced that an independent report on the public library service in England had been commissioned from the philanthropist, entrepreneur and publisher, William Sieghart. Mr Sieghart is leading an expert panel (which includes amongst its membership the Chief Executive of the British Library and the President of the Society of Chief Librarians) which will report to Ministers by the end of the year and address key questions including:

- What are the core principles of a public library into the future?
- Is the current model of delivery the most comprehensive and efficient? and
- What is the role of community libraries?

As context for the review, particularly telling is the huge apparent contrast in public library provision in England¹¹ as reflected in deep cuts in community libraries on the one hand and significant investment in certain of the big City libraries on the other. So over the same period that saw the opening of the £48m Manchester Central in 2014, Birmingham (£189m, opened 2013), Liverpool (£55m, opened 2013), and Newcastle (£24m, opened 2009), England saw the closure of 350 public library service points with the Library Campaign predicting that this figure would rise to 1,000 closures by 2015/16.

¹⁰ http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/contstrat/british_library_content_strategy_2013.pdf

¹¹ This may of course reflect a contrast between the munificence of the public funding environment when these buildings were commissioned and the subsequent austerity of current times.

In June 2014¹², Mr Sieghart signalled that he was not considering recommending changes to the existing public library authority structures in England; his view being that one size does not fit all and although there were some very good models already in existence, their approach would not be appropriate or desirable for every local authority. But he believed it was possible to strengthen the public library service nationally without losing the local approach. His strong view was that part of the answer can be found through offering a digital network for libraries, which could include a single management system, one library card valid in all libraries in England, and a new Teach First-style programme to attract new graduates to the profession and to refresh its skill-base. Once set up, he suggested that this network could also be a vehicle for: improving the leadership of, and vision for, libraries; more joined up procurement; the sharing of best practice and encouraging change – without conflicting with the need for local approaches. It could he thought give users access to a much wider choice of materials, and help facilitate delivery of other services such as health, welfare reform and tourism. And it could also he believed allow library services to be delivered in non-traditional library buildings, such as the local pub and shop, to give greater provision to rural communities. He was committed to try to find the funding to help provide this digital network by bringing as many Government pots of money together as possible while highlighting the importance of libraries to helping deliver many government initiatives. Sieghart had previously led another Government-commissioned review and on that occasion also the British Library's Chief Executive had been a member of his expert panel. [An Independent Review of E-Lending in Public Libraries in England](#)¹³, which reported in March 2013, sought to resolve the difficulties for the publishing and library communities of establishing agreed norms for digital lending and set out the following principles:

- Public libraries should be able to offer a remote E-lending service to their readers, free at the point of use;
- The interests of publishers and booksellers must be protected through 'frictions' that limit the supply of E-books in the same way that physical book loans are controlled;
- Pilot projects later in the year should test business models and help gather evidence of best practice; and
- The Public Lending Right should be extended to on-site e-loans, with consideration further ahead to including remote e-loans.

The British Library Trust was able to support the review by funding a series of pilot projects between publishers and libraries, using established literary events, to test business models and user behaviours, to build trust, and to help provide a solid evidence base for going forward. And similarly, while the final outcome of Sieghart's public libraries review is at the time of writing awaited, the British Library stands ready to support its recommendations.

¹² http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/first-features/-/journal_content/56/10180/6287803/NEWS

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-independent-review-of-e-lending-in-public-libraries-in-england>

BIPC Big City roll out – BL involvement

The British Library's Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) provides access to world-class business and intellectual property information and expertise under one roof. The Library's information resources - which include market research reports, up-to-the-minute company and financial information, and patent and trade mark databases - effectively give small businesses access to the same quality and depth of resources as those of a large multinational. The information is supplemented by free or highly-discounted workshops, one-to-one clinics, mentoring and networking events all designed to inspire people and to teach them the skills they need to set up and run a business. Since it was set up in 2006, it has welcomed over 350,000 people through its doors and has helped to create over 2,700 businesses. Now, in a joint project with the Intellectual Property Office (which comes under BIS oversight) and six major English city public libraries, the Library is extending the successful BIPC model across the country by establishing a co-branded network with one stop shop centres for small businesses and entrepreneurs in the city libraries of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. Once up and running, the six Centres will provide direct advice and guidance to over 25,000 people and will create over 500 businesses and 1,000 jobs each year. Funding from the ACE/DCLG Enterprising Libraries programme was secured to provide seed funding to support the six libraries to purchase business information resources and to refurbish and refit their library space. The Newcastle Business & IP Centre opened in May 2013, the Leeds Centre launched in March 2014 and, at the time of writing the other four BIPCs are currently operating in pilot mode and due to launch in the coming year. Plans to extend the network to other cities outside the six core cities are being advanced.

e-Legal deposit

New regulations (the Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013¹⁴) came into force on 6 April 2013, giving the British Library and the five other UK Legal Deposit Libraries (the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Wales, Bodleian Libraries, Cambridge University Library, and Trinity College, Dublin) the right to receive a copy of every UK electronic publication. The Regulations enable the six libraries to collect, preserve and provide long term access to the increasing proportion of the nation's cultural and intellectual output that appears in digital form – including blogs, e-books and the entire UK web domain. The Legal Deposit Libraries Act¹⁵ had established in 2003 the principle that legal deposit needed to evolve to reflect the massive shift to digital forms of publishing; the regulations finally made digital legal deposit a reality. This had been long-sought by the legal deposit libraries, concerned there was a very real danger of a digital “black hole” opening up in the nation's memory, and was a tremendously important step forward, ensuring that the fullest possible record of life in the UK in the 21st century is collected and preserved for future generations of researchers.

On behalf of the Legal Deposit Libraries, the British Library is archiving copies of freely accessible UK websites and web pages from the open web, using an automated crawling or harvesting process. A ‘snapshot’ of every website within scope, currently estimated at circa 4.8 million active sites, will be archived at least once a year. Some 200 to 500 websites within scope will be archived on a more frequent basis - such as quarterly, monthly, weekly or even daily - in order to ensure that rapidly changing or updated content is archived

¹⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2013/9780111533703/contents>

¹⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/28/contents>

adequately. Such websites will be selected by the Legal Deposit Libraries for their importance and research value, with the crawl frequency being adapted to the circumstances and nature of the content. And in addition, the Legal Deposit Libraries will crawl other selected websites in order to develop ‘special collections’. Perhaps four or five new collections will be developed each year for important events (which may involve crawling specific websites relatively frequently for a limited period) or important themes (which may involve crawling selected websites regularly over a longer period). By the end of March 2014, the BL had 140,000 E-journals available to access in its reading rooms and approximately 1.3 billion URLs were also available as a result of crawls of the .uk domain.

Significant recent UK Government policy initiatives

There is of course a mosaic of other policies, both information-related and other national policies eg education or research, that impact on libraries. Four areas of recent UK government policy – open access to research findings, copyright, transparency – the opening up of UK Government data, and Big Data – have each had, and are having, a particularly significant impact.

The 2011 Hargreaves Review¹⁶ looked at the UK intellectual property framework to determine whether the laws designed more than three centuries ago with the express purpose of creating economic incentives for innovation by protecting creators’ rights were today obstructing innovation and economic growth. Hargreaves found that UK IP law was falling behind and needed to adapt in the interests of encouraging innovation and growth. The British Library’s submission to the Hargreaves Review had called for reforms to make it easier for cultural institutions to digitise Orphan Works – including millions of items held in national collections where the rights-holder could not be identified – and thereby deliver benefits for research and education. The Library had also supported measures to allow text and data mining with a view to encouraging medical, environmental and other scientific research – along with streamlined processes for clearing rights for commercially-produced works to be used in digital libraries and other cultural projects.

The British Library welcomed Hargreaves’ recommendations for the immediate benefit they would have for research, life-long learning and teaching. In response to Hargreaves’ recommendations, the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (ERR) Act 2013 provided the Secretary of State with a power to introduce an orphan works licensing scheme for the licensing of individual orphan works and to consider applications from collecting societies for voluntary extended collective licensing (ECL) in the UK. And at the time of writing, regulations relating to both ECL and the orphan works scheme have been laid before Parliament and are progressing through the legislature. In June 2014, five statutory instruments on exceptions to copyright were enacted with the effect of

- Making digital preservation of sound and film lawful;
- Extending ‘fair dealing’ for non-commercial research and private study to allow the copying of sound and film, including the facilitation of copying by a librarian or curator;

¹⁶ Hargreaves, Ian. Digital opportunity: a review of intellectual property and growth, May 2011. <http://www.ip.gov.uk/ipreview-finalreport.pdf>

- Allowing the digitisation of the Library’s analogue collections to be used on dedicated computer terminals on the Library’s own premises;
- Allowing Text and Data Mining for non-commercial research purposes;
- Allowing the Library and its users to apply UK copyright limitations and exceptions, irrespective of contracts with publishers and suppliers.

The Report of the Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings known as the Finch Report¹⁷, published in June 2012, recommended a balanced programme of action to enable more people to read and use the publications arising from publicly-funded research, and to accelerate the progress towards a fully open access environment. It recommended a clear policy direction in the UK towards support for ‘Gold’ open access publishing, where publishers receive their revenues from authors rather than readers, and so research articles become freely accessible to everyone immediately upon publication. At the same time, the report recommended extensions to current licensing arrangements in the higher education, health and other sectors; improvements to the infrastructure of repositories, and support for the moves by publishers to provide access to the great majority of journals in public libraries. The Government accepted all the report’s recommendations speedily and looked to the Funding Councils and Research Councils to implement them in consultation with universities, research institutions, researchers and publishers. A follow-up review in November 2013¹⁸ concluded that “the policy positions adopted by the Government, Research Councils UK, and the UK Funding Bodies – and the responses to those policies from universities, publishers and learned societies – mean that there is now real momentum behind the moves to OA across all parts of the scholarly communications system”. A formal co-ordinating structure has been established, convened by Universities UK, to secure dialogue and engagement across all the stakeholders in research communications; to co-ordinate their work and avoid duplication or divergence in areas including development of the infrastructure, evidence-gathering, monitoring, and communications; and to deal with issues and problems as they arise.

One of the recommendations from the Finch Group was that the major journal publishers should grant public libraries a licence to provide free access to their academic articles. February 2014 saw the launch of the Access to Research initiative¹⁹, a two-year pilot, giving users in public libraries free walk-in access to a selection of research published in peer reviewed journals. Access to Research is available to all public libraries across the UK wishing to use the service and is thought will be of especial interest to students in further education, independent researchers and small businesses. It will provide licensed online access to over 1.5 million journal articles and conference proceedings from designated public library terminals. Subjects include art, architecture, business, engineering, history, languages, politics, philosophy, mathematics and the sciences, and 8,400 journals were included in the initiative at launch. The initiative has been led and implemented by the Publishers Licensing

¹⁷ <http://www.researchinfonet.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Finch-Group-report-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

¹⁸<http://www.researchinfonet.org/implementing-the-recommendations-of-the-finch-report//>

¹⁹ <http://accesstoresearch.pls.org.uk/>

Society and is the result of a successful collaboration between publishers, represented by the Publishers Association, and librarians, represented by the Society of Chief Librarians. These initiatives are an embodiment of the UK Government's commitment to the principle that published research material which has been publicly financed should be publicly accessible - and that principle goes well beyond the academic community; there has to be a "right to roam" freely across the achievements of publicly-funded UK research. We see these principles appear again in the introduction to the Government's June 2012 Open Data White Paper ²⁰ with the Minister of the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General stating in the Introduction:

"Data is the 21st century's new raw material. Its value is in holding Governments to account; in driving choice and improvements in public services; and in inspiring innovation and enterprise that spurs social and economic growth.... Transparency is at the heart of our agenda for government. We believe that opening up will empower citizens, foster innovation and reform public services..... We're creating an information marketplace for entrepreneurs and businesses; releasing valuable raw data from real time transport information to weather data".

The Government's Open Data (or Transparency) agenda has led to the establishment of a Research Transparency Sector Board tasked with advising government on how to increase access to research data, with the aim of fuelling new discovery and innovation, and ultimately economic growth and societal benefit. At the time of writing, over 10,000 public datasets have been published on data.gov.uk, and the Open Data Institute²¹ founded by Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Professor Nigel Shadbolt, is "... catalysing the evolution of open data culture to create economic, environmental, and social value". And partly in response to a growing call from Government for open data, but also in the firm belief that open metadata is a logical evolutionary step for the long-established library principle of freedom of access to information, the British Library has adopted a new open metadata strategy designed to remove barriers such as restrictive licensing, proprietary formats and access standards that prevented wider use of its descriptive metadata. The Linked Open British National Bibliography service²² has been well received by the library community with the new data model proving influential on a number of international initiatives including the US Library of Congress' [Bibframe](http://bibframe.org) project. The service was cited by the UK Cabinet Office in 2012 as a public sector exemplar for opening up data. More recently the service has been added to data.gov.uk and has been accepted for the Government's new National Information Infrastructure initiative.

In their introduction to Seizing the data opportunity: a strategy for UK data capability(October 2013)²³, the Minister for Universities and Science and Minister for Skills and Enterprise stated:

²⁰ http://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

²¹ <http://theodi.org/about-us>

²² <http://bnb.data.bl.uk/>

²³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254136/bis-13-1250-strategy-for-uk-data-capability-v4.pdf

“One of the greatest opportunities and challenges facing policymakers today is the ever increasing significance of data. Data underpins our businesses and our economy, providing new insights into consumer needs and enabling new products and services to be developed. The next generation of scientific discovery and innovation will be data-driven, from modelling and simulation, to handling massive data traffic. Governments around the world must change the way they engage with citizens, the way they develop policy and deliver services, and the way they are held to account. The benefits for citizens are many, from revolutionising the information available at our fingertips with clever apps, to taking back control of our own data to understand energy use or spending habits, data can change the way we live our lives. The UK government is determined to position the UK to make the most of the data revolution”.

The Government pledged £189 million of funding for big data in last year’s Autumn Statement and in March 2014, funding of £42m was announced to establish the Alan Turing Institute, a new national institute which will undertake new research in ways of collecting, organising and analysing big data. The British Library has welcomed these important investments to enable advances in Big Data analytics and it has urged that Big Data in arts and humanities (as opposed to Big Data created as part of scientific process) which is just emerging as a major driver of new discoveries and business advancement, also be strongly supported.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a case study of a country – the United Kingdom – which does not have a formal overarching national information and library policy. The paper has mapped out the landscape of library provision and concluded that Government policy oversight and funding for libraries in the UK is highly fragmented and additionally complicated by the devolution of responsibilities under the UK’s constitutional framework. The absence of a unitary governance, policy and funding structure within Government for provision places a greater onus on the libraries themselves to collaborate both within and across sectors - recent developments of a collaborative and pragmatic nature have been described -and the complexity resulting from the lack of a clear centralised policy framework increases the scale of the collaborative challenge. There is of course a mosaic of other policies, both information-related and other national policies (e.g. education or research), that impact on libraries. Four areas of recent UK government policy – open access to research findings, copyright, transparency – the opening up of UK Government data, and Big Data – have each had and are having a particularly significant impact.

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