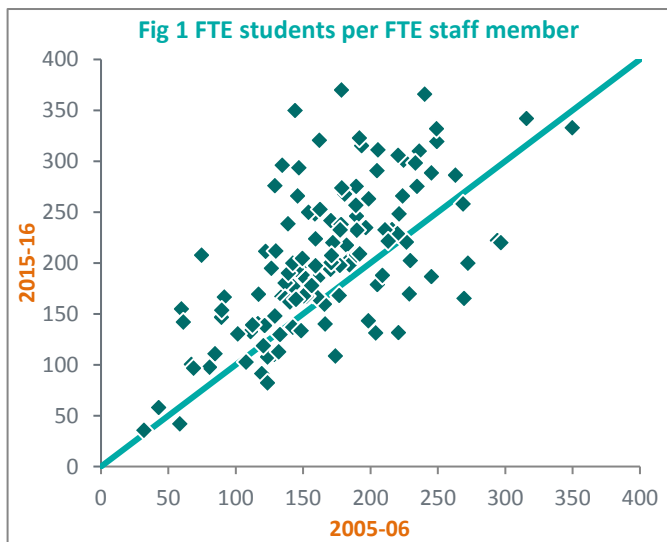


Commentary and notes on the statistics

Spotlight on: Library staff

The last ten to fifteen years have witnessed the meteoric rise of e-resources, so that, in 2017 students are constantly connected digitally and library resources have had to evolve rapidly to ensure that they support the concept of learning anytime, anyplace. However, despite the reduction in the use of print materials, University libraries remain popular places to study and continue to experience high footfall.

Last year, this report highlighted how the physical space in academic libraries has changed to reflect the shift from print to digital and the students' perception of the library as a learning space (see <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/sconul-statistics-reports>). This report for the 2015-16 SCONUL Annual Statistics examines how library staff are evolving and adapting in this context.



Since 2005-06 the general trend has been one of an overall increase in the average number of FTE students per FTE library staff member, from 147 to 186 in 2015-16. This means that there are currently almost 40 more FTE students per staff member, on average, than in 2005-06. This increase is a result of a 9.3% increase in the number of students, and an overall decrease, also of 9.3%, in the total number of library staff FTE between 2005-06 and 2014-15. It is important to note, however, that this pattern has not been experienced throughout the UK HE sector, with

almost one third of institutions - thirty out of the 98 providing the data in both years – reporting fewer FTE students per library staff FTE in 2015-16 compared to 2005-06, and thereby lying below the line of equality in Fig1¹. It is important to note that the underlying reasons for those institutions reporting fewer FTE students per FTE staff member in 2015-16 compared to 2005-06 appears to vary – with eleven respondents reporting a decrease in the number of FTE students over the ten-year period, and eighteen respondents reporting overall increases of more than 20% in library staff FTE since 2005-06.

As well as the increase in workload due to the increasing number of students, the increasing reliance on e-resources has also led to library staff having to develop new skills to manage formats and products that did not previously exist. External factors, such as the growth of the Open Access movement, have also created entirely new bodies of work which often fall within

¹ Note that, throughout this commentary, figures for 2015-16 are based on actual respondents, and do not include estimates for non-respondents. Figures for previous years are taken from the SCONUL database, and include estimates for non-respondents, unless noted otherwise.

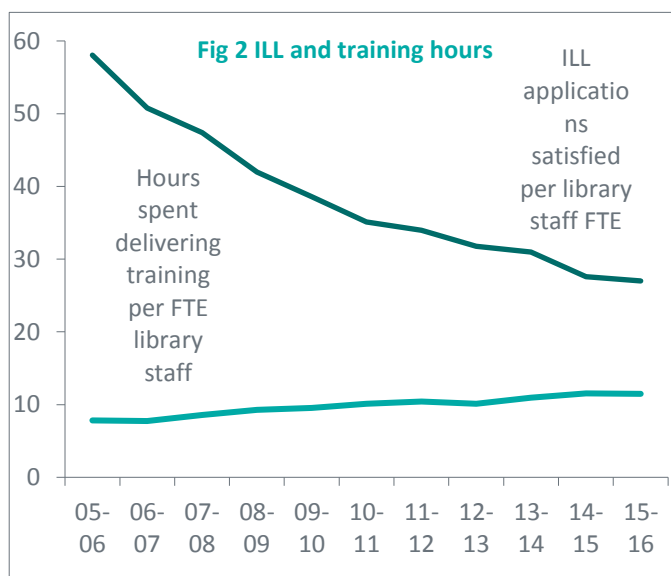
the library sphere, such as the introduction of institutional repositories – the responsibility for which often lies within the University library – has provided new opportunities and roles for library staff. In 2015-16, 126 UK respondents (86%) provided details on the number of full-text items available externally in their institutional repository, thereby indicating that the library was responsible for the institutional repository.

Another new role increasingly undertaken by library staff involves the Article Processing Charges (APC's) relating to Open Access publishing. In the most recent year, a total of 43 UK respondents (29%) indicated that the budget for the purchase of APC's is held by the library, with the overall expenditure ranging from £1,609 to over £3 million. By comparison, in 2014-15 (the first year for which this information was collected), 39 UK respondents (27%) indicated that the library held the budget for APC's. Whilst this is still a relatively new part of e-resource management, it will be interesting to see how it develops over time and how the number of libraries holding the budget for APCs – and the sums involved – change. In addition, Research Data Management is another area that is increasingly becoming part of the libraries remit – no data is currently available, however, this is one area that SCONUL are looking to incorporate in to the Annual Statistics next year.

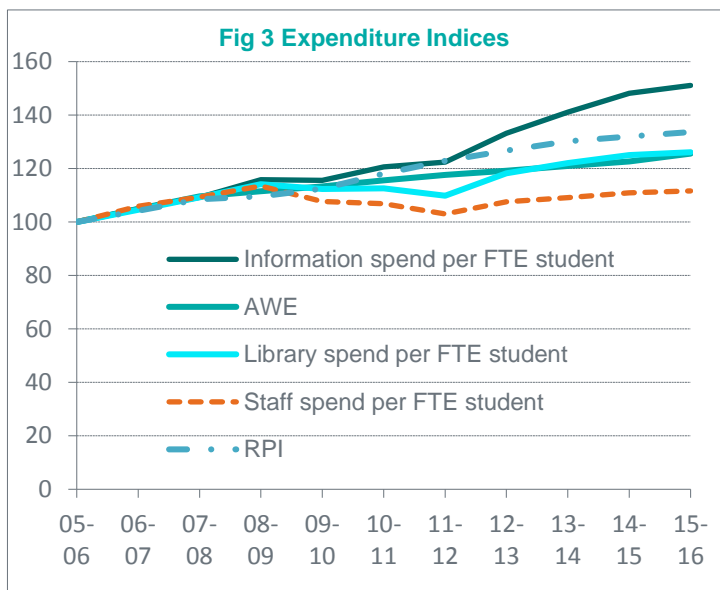
The more traditional roles of the academic librarian are also changing in importance, for example, Inter-Library loans and the provision of user training. Fig 2 illustrates that the average number of Inter-library loans per library staff FTE has decreased significantly over the ten-year period, so that the average in 2015-16 is less than half that reported in 2005-06.

The increasing availability of e-resources will have impacted on this figure, with students now able to access a wider range of resources from their own library than was previously possible with print only materials.

In contrast to this, Fig 2 also highlights that each library staff FTE is, on average, spending almost four hours more time delivering training than was the case ten years ago.



Twenty-four hour opening will also have an impact on library staffing levels and staff workload, and appears to be increasingly popular with 107 UK respondents (73%) indicating that some/all of their libraries offered 24-hour opening for all or part of the year in 2015-16 – compared to 100 UK respondents (67%) in 2013-14. Note that in some institutions some of these additional hours may be covered only by security staff, with self-service options available, however. There has been an increase of around 5.0% in the average number of visits per FTE student in 2015-16 – this is possibly, in part, due to the increasing number of institutions operating 24 hour opening in their libraries for part or all of the year.



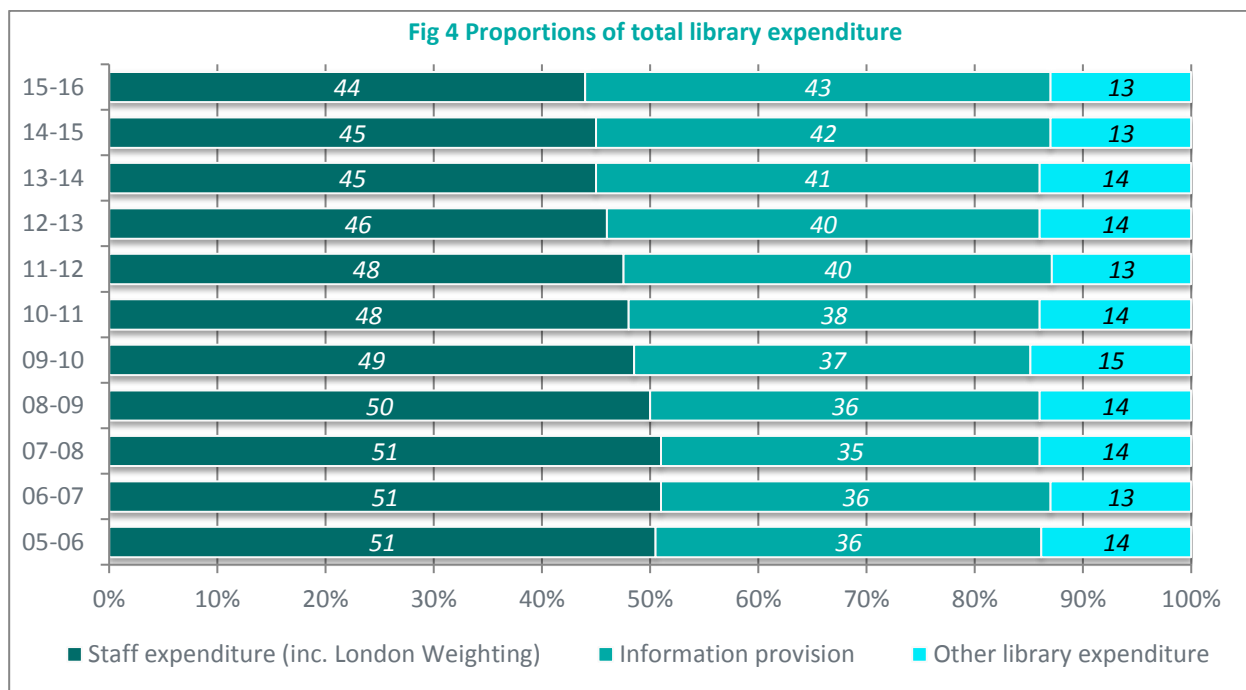
Total library expenditure per FTE student has increased by 26% overall since 2005-06, on average, compared to increases of 11.7% in average library staff expenditure per FTE student and 51% in average information provision expenditure per FTE student. Fig 3 displays the indexes of Average Weekly Earnings, the Retail Price Index (RPI), library expenditure per FTE student, library staff expenditure per FTE student and information provision expenditure per FTE student. Library staff expenditure has not kept pace with the Retail Price Index, information provision

expenditure, overall library expenditure or Average Weekly Earnings since 2008-09. Fig 3 also emphasises that information provision expenditure per FTE student has increased at a faster pace than library staff expenditure per FTE student, total library expenditure per FTE student and the Retail Price Index since 2005-06.

This is emphasised further by Fig 4, which illustrates the proportions of library expenditure accounted for by staff (including London Weighting), information provision and ‘other’ operational expenditure over the ten-year period. As can be seen, staff expenditure accounted for around half of total library expenditure over the period 2005-06 to 2009-10, however, since then, the proportion of library expenditure accounted for by staff has fallen steadily, so that it stands at 44% in 2015-16 – a decrease of seven percentage points overall since 2005-06. In contrast to this, information provision expenditure accounted for 36% of total library expenditure in 2005-06 and 2006-07, however, since then, the proportion of library expenditure accounted for by information provision has increased steadily so that it stands at 43% in the most recent year – an increase of seven percentage points since 2005-06. The proportion of total library expenditure accounted for by ‘other’ operational expenditure appears to have remained relatively stable throughout the ten-year period – fluctuating between 13 and 15% in each year.

It is worth noting, that when we consider the proportion of library expenditure accounted for by journals (including those in databases) for the reduced set of SCONUL members providing data in both 2009-10 and 2015-16, we see that it has increased from 20% to 25% in the most recent year. This indicates that the increase in the proportion of library expenditure accounted for by information provision is largely due to the rise of e-resources, which has resulted in journal titles increasingly becoming available in packages, so that currently there are 3.8 journal titles per FTE student, on average, compared to 1.4 in 2009-10 (the first year that titles in databases were included). In particular, the cost of journal ‘Big Deals’ has increased at a faster rate than both inflation and library budgets, and whilst this does result in universities providing access to a larger number of titles, often these deals will include titles that are not

particularly relevant or heavily used. Taken together, this would appear to indicate that the UK HE sector as a whole is increasing the level of service it provides with regards to information provision, and in particular e-resources – at the expense of staffing.



The figures above illustrate the changing role of the university librarian. The rapid rise of e-resources has led to a decline in the more traditional aspects of academic librarianship including the maintenance of print collections and Inter-Library loans, and the introduction of new responsibilities including database and website maintenance, institutional repositories and APCs. This does not appear to have come without a cost, however, with information provision expenditure accounting for a steadily increasing proportion of library expenditure – at the expense of staff. Despite the switch to e-resources, University libraries remain popular and staff workloads are increasing as they take on new responsibilities, more training and an increasing number of students.

Informal groupings of institutions used for summary data

SCONUL’s higher education members vary considerably in both size and character. As an aid to the interpretation of these statistics, libraries have been divided into four informal groups, which tend to have many characteristics in common. These are:

‘RLUK’ UK members of Research Libraries UK (formerly the Consortium of University Research Libraries)

‘Old’ Those universities founded or chartered before the Education Reform Act 1992, excluding RLUK members.

‘New’ Universities incorporated in 1992 or subsequently. These include the former polytechnics, and some former HE colleges.

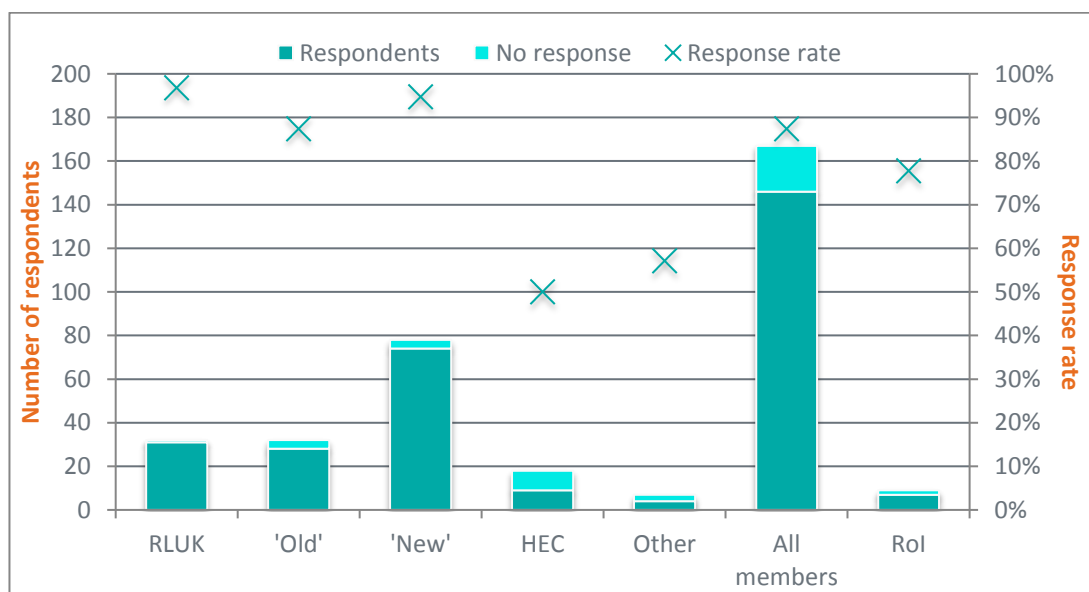
HEC Higher education colleges which do not have formal university status. These are primarily small institutions, each specialising in a narrow range of subjects, although the set of subjects covered is diverse.

Membership of these groups changes from year to year, as institutions merge, HE colleges gain university status, and new members join RLUK. Institutions are included in the group to which they belonged for the majority of the year to which the statistics relate. Changes in groups from the previous year are given at the end of the notes to the returns (*page 96*). A small number of members fall outside these groups; in particular independent institutions which do not report to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the college libraries of Oxford and Cambridge universities, and the Open University. Their data are included in the overall totals, however.

For the third time this year information on the mission groups (Russell Group, University Alliance, million+, GuildHE) to which institutions belong has been included in the survey.

Response rate

Fig 6: SCONUL UK university/college membership and response rates



The UK response by institution type is illustrated in Fig 6. The compilers are grateful to the many institutions which provided statistics and spent time answering queries.

FTE users

Data for FTE students and FTE academic staff in the UK were obtained from HESA wherever possible. Their definitions are given on page 99. Data for other institutional employees (FTE) and registered external users (actual numbers) were obtained directly from respondents. In order to calculate a figure for total FTE users, the number of registered external users has been scaled by a factor of 40% to approximate to FTE use.

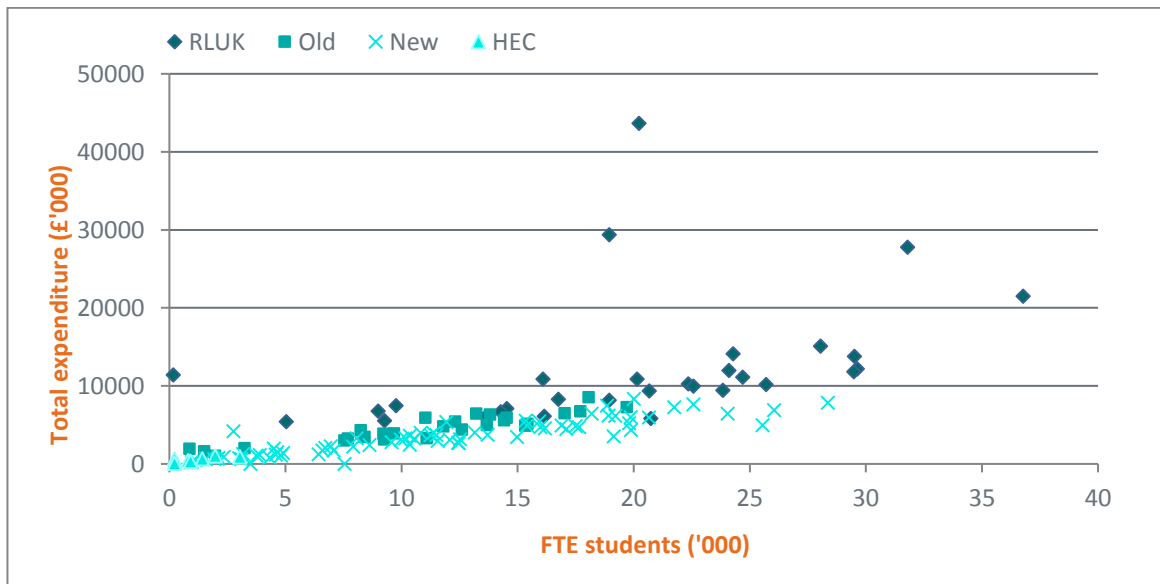
Accuracy

Over recent years, respondents have made efforts to improve the quality of data returned, and each year there are fewer gaps and less data identified as not conforming to the definitions. There is also increased consistency over the distinction between “not applicable” (*the activity concerned is not performed at the institution*), “not known” (*the activity does occur, but is not counted or analysed in such a way as to provide a figure*) and “nil” (*the count is zero for the year in question*); however, there may still be a few instances where *n/a* has been entered instead of *n/k*, and vice versa. There may also be a few cases where respondents have entered *n/k*, but the relevant information is included in another column. Respondents are encouraged to mark any such combined data entries clearly. Figures which are known not to conform to the standard definitions are indicated by the use of italics in the data tables. In some instances explanatory notes have been included, and readers should refer to these to aid interpretation.

There remain some problem areas, most notably concerning the provision and use of electronic resources. Work undertaken in conjunction with the E-Measures Project at Evidence Base at Birmingham City University has now been incorporated into the return. Users of the statistics are recommended to read the notes to the returns (*pp 70-96*) in conjunction with the figures, to aid interpretation.

Financial summary

Fig 7: Total library expenditure and student numbers (UK)



The range of expenditure levels, and their close relationship with student numbers, is shown in Fig 7. A summary of the main financial figures has been included before the main data tables (*pp 10-13*) provision, equipment, and other operating expenditure. The 143 UK members which provided full details for this summary spent £768 million in total, an average of £419 per FTE student.

Strategic Planning Set

The data collected in the Strategic Planning Set are included between the summary of the main financial data and the main data tables (*pp 14-25*). These tables present the most recent available data and so may vary from those in the Strategic Planning Set tables originally released in December 2016. Additional derived ratios are also included within this data set – not all of which are repeated within the derived ratios section of the report.

Main data tables

The main data tables (*pp 26-49*) show the data as received from each institution. The data extend over four pages for each column. The list of institutions (*pp 70-96*) is given in the same order as the data and provides a key to the identifiers used, with all institution names given as of July 2016. The 2013-14 SCONUL return saw a great deal of change with several questions being made optional or removed from the questionnaire completely. All mandatory items from the questionnaire are shown, and columns are generally in the order of the questionnaire, although some slight changes have been made to facilitate presentation. A copy of the tables in excel format, including the optional questions is also available. A copy of the full questionnaire, including the notes, optional questions and definitions, is included at Appendix B for reference (*pp 100-108*).

Entries in italics in the tables do not conform to the standard definitions for the column, either because they include data which should properly be included in another column, or for some other reason, given in the notes to the tables (*pp 70-96*). Where figures relate to two or more columns, this is indicated within the body of the tables.

An extended set of summary statistics has also been included. Summary figures are given separately for each of the four major UK library groups – RLUK members (excluding Trinity College Dublin), other 'old' universities, 'new' universities and higher education colleges. The total for all UK respondents is also given. The mean, minimum and maximum have been supplemented with the upper and lower quartiles, for each group. These summary statistics include data which do not conform to the standard definitions, identified by the use of italics in the tables.

Some relevant totals not included on the questionnaire have been included at appropriate points in the series. Detailed definitions for these columns are given in Appendix A (*page 97*). If a component of a calculated total has been marked *n/k* in the return, generally that total has not been included for that institution. Data on FTE students and academic staff, and total institutional expenditure have been obtained directly from HESA as far as possible. These will therefore correspond with those which will be published in HESA's *Higher education management statistics*.

Because of their different regulatory framework and currency, SCONUL members from the Irish Republic, have not been integrated into the alphabetical sequence of institutions, but are grouped together following the UK list. They are also not included in the UK members' summary data. Separate summary statistics have been provided; however these are limited and, in particular, means for the derived ratios have been calculated only where at least three of the six responding members have provided data.

Derived statistics

The derived statistics follow the main data tables, starting on page 50. Full definitions for each are given in Appendix A (pp 97-99). Only those derived statistics based on mandatory questions are included here, the full set is included in the excel spreadsheet containing the optional questions. As for the totals in the main tables, if any component of a derived ratio has been marked *n/k* in the return, that ratio has not been calculated for that institution. The ratios have been divided into the following broad groups:

- Library provision and use (pp 50-53)
- Stock - provision (pp 54-57)
- Stock – expenditure and use (pp 58-61)
- Staff workload (pp 58-65)
- Financial ratios (pp 62-69)
- Electronic resources (pp 66-69)

Where source data items do not conform to the standard definitions, ratios have been included in the lines for individual institutions wherever possible, and are shown in italics. Note that the averages given are the weighted averages of all institutions included, not the arithmetic average of the ratios shown.

LISU database project and the Statistical Reporting Tool

The 2015-16 statistics will be incorporated into the LISU database and uploaded to the Statistical Reporting Tool shortly after publication. LISU is grateful to those members who have taken the trouble to answer queries on their historic data and so improve the quality of the available data. The Statistical Reporting Tool is accessible to members on the SCONUL web site.

If any institution becomes aware of errors in the published data from 1991-92 onwards, they are asked to send details directly to LISU so that corrections can be made in the database. Similarly, if any institution has previously unpublished data that they are prepared to have included in the historical database, they should contact LISU (lisu@lboro.ac.uk).

LISU is able to undertake specific analyses and investigations on behalf of individual institutions, for a small fee to cover the staff time required. Any interested institutions are asked to contact Sonya White at LISU (s.u.white@lboro.ac.uk) to discuss their requirements.

Electronic publication

The data in this report can be made available, for a charge, on disk. Requests should be made to the SCONUL Executive Director at the address given on the verso of the title page. A comma or tab delimited database file of the data can also be supplied, although this will not include the derived ratios or summary statistics. Other versions can be made available on request.

Related information

The Universities & Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) compiles statistics relating to computing services in institutions of higher education in the UK. Summary figures are published on its web site at <http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/bestpractice/surveys/statistics.aspx>.

The Association of Research Libraries (North America) maintains an extensive web site covering their annual statistics and permitting extraction of subsets of the data. Further information can be found at <http://www.arl.org/focus-areas/statistics-assessment/arl-statistics-salary-survey>.

Acknowledgements

The above report is an excerpt from the 2015-16 SCONUL Annual Library Statistics, prepared for SCONUL by Sonya White from LISU at Loughborough University at the request of SCONUL and published by SCONUL in 2017. If you are not a member of SCONUL and would like a copy of the full report, contact SCONUL www.sconul.ac.uk/page/contact-us

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