



Libraries and the Regions: A Discussion Paper

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Foreword by Alan Howarth, Minister for the Arts

The past two years have seen regional issues move up the political agenda, both within DCMS and across Government as a whole. The network of Regional Cultural Consortia is now in place and cultural bodies have begun to work with the new Regional Development Agencies to realise their economic potential. At the same time, the creation of the new Museums, Libraries and Archives Council will increase the scope for co-operation and joint working at both a national and regional level.

There are undoubted opportunities here for libraries. They have the potential to lead the cultural sector in areas like new technology, lifelong learning and in the provision of information services. But, if libraries are to take full advantage of these developments, there must be a more strategic focus for libraries at a regional level. Building up a strong and effective regional presence will help libraries to take full advantage of the emerging opportunities.

Given this background, the main unanswered questions concern how libraries can best articulate their new regional role. To help focus the debate, my Department has reviewed the role of the Regional Library Systems and identified possible options for the future. This discussion paper sets out our initial recommendations on how the library sector can meet these new challenges at a regional level and asks for your views on what the Regional Library Systems of the future should look like.

Alan Howarth

Summary of Key Recommendations

This report identifies a number of issues relating to library and information services in England at a regional level. Its main recommendations are that:

- (i) Regional Library Systems (RLSs) and other regional library bodies need to represent a broad range of libraries in their area. They should seek to expand their membership and encourage all libraries in their area to join.
- (ii) Regional bodies for libraries should preferably be organised along Government Office geographical boundaries.
- (iii) There are likely to be funding implications associated with the drive to tackle strategic issues at a regional level. RLSs are encouraged to explore the options available to them in order to obtain any additional resources that may be required to support this. In the longer term, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) may wish to support projects that encourage cross-sectoral strategic work.
- (iv) It is for individual RLSs and their members to decide what services should be offered and how these should be funded but they should exploit the opportunities for providing services in partnership with other RLSs or other cultural agencies. As demand for traditional interlibrary lending services changes, RLSs should also consider alternative ways to encourage co-operation and access to resources through new technologies.
- (v) There is an increasing need for a strategic and developmental work for the library and information sector at a regional level. Libraries in each region need to consider whether the RLS, a separate library development agency, Library Association branch or other bodies are best placed to take on this strategic role.
- (vi) Libraries should be represented on RCCs by bodies based in their geographical area, who can speak for a broad spectrum of libraries in the region, and who can take a strategic view of priorities and opportunities for the sector.
- (vii) There should be greater strategic and co-operative working between libraries and museums and archives at a regional level. RLSs need to formulate clear policies on this and develop relationships with MLAC and with corresponding regional bodies in the museums and archives sector.
- (viii) Regional Library Systems should consider how to develop the work currently undertaken by CONARLS and LINC, and investigate the possibility of merging the two bodies, to create a strong single voice and a national focus of expertise for the regions.

Section 1: Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The first regional interlibrary lending systems came into existence in the 1930s. Some Regional Library Systems are still based on this core function of facilitating the interlending of books and other materials between different types of libraries. Others have moved into a more developmental role, acting as a focus for advice and expertise in the region and co-ordinating joint projects.
- 1.2 Recent changes in the political, economic and cultural environment have highlighted the need for a more strategic regional focus for libraries. In particular, the Department's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) emphasised the importance of the regions and aimed to provide more coherent and effective action at a regional level for the Department's cultural and economic sectors. More specifically, the CSR encouraged the development of a stronger regional structure for libraries, announced the establishment of a new strategic cultural body in each region and committed the Department to create a new national body, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, which is likely to have a significant impact on the regional agenda. Details of these developments are set out at Appendix A.
- 1.3 The Department has therefore conducted a review of Regional Library Systems (RLSs) in England, encompassing an analysis of the work currently conducted within different RLSs and identification of possible options for their future development. This paper sets out the results of that review, including issues for further discussion and the Department's interim recommendations. We would welcome comments on these recommendations by 5 January 2000.
- 1.4 As background to the review, representatives of the Department have visited each of the seven RLSs in England. We are grateful to the RLSs for their help and hospitality, and for sharing with us the information and views on which this discussion paper is based

Future Opportunities

- 1.5 The review confirmed that recent changes to the environment within which libraries operate present many potential opportunities for improved inter and intra regional co-ordination. These include:
 - the establishment of Government Offices in the Regions and Regional Development Agencies and their responsibility for the Single Regeneration Budget;
 - the establishment of Regional Cultural Consortia and the development of Regional Cultural Strategies;
 - the creation of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the need to identify cross-sectoral agendas at national and regional level;

- the rapid development of information and telecommunication technologies, which opens up the opportunity for libraries to provide co-operative services and reduces the significance of traditional administrative boundaries;
- the need for co-ordination to maximise funding opportunities, particularly from European sources and the National Lottery;
- changes to the structure and role of local government which have increased the need for co-ordination between and within authorities;
- the development of the Modernising Government agenda and new ways of delivering public services;
- the need to maximise the benefit of the total library resource at a time of continuing pressure on resources and growing public expectations; and
- changes in the academic sector following the two Joint Funding Council Libraries Review Reports, including the Anderson Report, which recommended that national and regional strategies for library provision should involve the national copyright libraries, university research libraries, large public libraries and other specialist libraries.

1.6 The review also concluded that there is an urgent need for the library sector to consider how strategic functions can best be fulfilled at a regional level. The key strategic priorities over the next three years are likely to be:

- contributing towards a regional focus of expertise and advice to other regional and national bodies, including Regional Cultural Consortia, Government Offices for the Region, Regional Development Agencies, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and other Government Departments. This would include input to policy-making;
- developing a mechanism for contributing to national and regional cultural and information strategies;
- ensuring regional library and information planning, strategy and development, perhaps through the development of a library and information plan for the region. This could include cross-sectoral co-operation and co-ordination, marketing and promotion of services in the region, co-ordinated acquisition, IT exchange and development, and co-ordination of policies for preservation, conservation, dispersal and disposal; and
- providing advice and co-ordination of funding applications, including European and National Lottery funds.

1.7 In the past, many Regional Library Systems have focused primarily on operational issues and have not fully grasped the wider strategic agenda. This is increasingly changing but it has created a perception that strategic regional issues have not been a high priority for library authorities. However, if libraries are to participate fully in these new arrangements and benefit from future opportunities it will be essential that they can speak with a strong regional voice.

- 1.8 A model Regional Library System would be based on the boundaries of the Government Office for that area. It would provide a range of services that meet its members' needs, offer strategic advice and developmental work, co-ordinate collaborative activities and represent its region's libraries on regional and national fora. However, each Regional Library System has a different history and background and the library sector needs to consider how to meet these challenges in each region, what the RLS of the future should look like, and whether some of the challenges are better met by new organisational arrangements.

Section 2: Organisation

Structure

- 2.1 There are currently ten Regional Library Systems covering the United Kingdom, seven of which cover England. These are the East Midlands Regional Library System (EMRLS), Information North (IN), London and South Eastern Library Region (LASER), North Western Regional Library System (NWRLS), South Western Regional Library System (SWRLS), West Midlands Regional Library System (WMRLS) and Yorkshire Libraries and Information (YLI). Details of each RLS are at Appendix B.
- 2.2 The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 provides for the constitution of 'regional councils' for interlibrary co-operation. However, this provision has never been brought into force because of the existing Regional Library Systems. The Act also allows the Secretary of State to require such 'regional councils' to enter into arrangements with other bodies, to establish joint boards to carry out library functions, and to make grants to bodies which make facilities available to library authorities. Under the Act, library authorities may also make joint arrangements with other authorities to provide library facilities, enter into co-operative arrangements and make financial contributions towards the provision of such facilities. The Department does not intend to use these powers at present. Regional Library Systems are well-established as membership organisations with different methods of governance and organisation and there does not seem to be any need or pressure to impose changes to the way in which they are currently established. Instead it is for individual RLSs, library authorities and other regional library and information services to determine for themselves the most appropriate form of development.
- 2.3 Regional Library Systems have a variety of methods of governance. Many are limited companies and registered charities. They are generally managed by committees with elected or honorary officers. Some committees are made up of professional librarians as representatives of local public libraries but others include elected members (ie local councillors).
- 2.4 Members of Regional Library Systems include nearly all public and university libraries and a large number of other public and private sector organisations. However, the library and information sector also includes further education colleges, commercial libraries, learned society libraries, health libraries, school libraries and other smaller specialist libraries. Some of these may have less use for interlending services and are not members of RLSs. If RLSs are to be truly representative of libraries in their region, and if they are to develop their strategic role, it is important that they have as broad a membership base as possible. The Department is happy to discuss with RLSs what part it can play in helping to bring this about.

Recommendation (i) – Regional Library Systems and other regional library bodies need to present a broad range of libraries in their area. They should seek to expand their membership and encourage all libraries in their area to join.

Geographical Boundaries

- 2.5 The Modernising Government White Paper sets out the aim of aligning the boundaries of public bodies to make administration easier, increase efficiency and aid joined-up government.¹ In an ideal world, RLSs would work to the same geographical boundaries as the Government Offices for the Regions, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and the new Regional Cultural Consortiums. This would ensure that in each area there was a single point of contact and a clear representative body for libraries. However, not all RLSs' boundaries are co-terminous with those of other regional bodies. The current LASER region covers the Government Office regions for London, the South East and part of the East of England. Two Regional Library Systems, LASER and EMRLS, therefore each cover half of the East of England Government Office region. However, some areas covered by the Government Office for the South East (Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Southampton and Portsmouth) are members of SWRLS rather than LASER. In the North West, Cumbria is part of the North West Regional Development Agency but its libraries are members of Information North.
- 2.6 Where this is the case, Regional Library Systems have already made their own arrangements for co-operation and to ensure that the sector is properly represented on the appropriate Regional Cultural Consortiums. The East of England Library Development Agency was established in 1999 as a separate body, based on the principle that East of England representation for libraries can only be drawn from libraries within that area. In the London area, a feasibility study by the Vision Research Consortium recommended that a London Library Development Agency (LLDA) be established with a limited remit. The Association of London Government, in association with the London Boroughs, is taking this recommendation forward, and it is likely that the LLDA will emerge as the principal source of strategic advice and information matters to the Greater London Authority.
- 2.7 The Department believes that it is essential for there to be a single and representative voice for libraries for each Government Office area. Ideally this will be one body dealing with both operational and strategic issues. Where this is not possible, inter-library lending and other operational services could continue to be organised within the traditional geographical boundaries of the RLSs, while separate library development agencies based on Government Office boundaries could represent the sector in its relations with other regional and national bodies and develop a more strategic role. However, by adding an extra tier to the system, this may lead to confusion and duplication of effort, making co-ordination difficult. In such a situation, it would therefore be important for the different operational and strategic bodies to agree their respective roles and set out clearly defined areas of responsibility.

Recommendation (ii) – Regional bodies for libraries should ~~prefer~~ be organised along Government Office geographical boundaries

¹ "Modernising Government", Cabinet Office, March 1999, p33.

Resources and Staff

- 2.8 The size and resources of Regional Library Systems vary greatly. Their operations range from a Regional Librarian and a Regional Assistant, both working half-time, in EMRLS to 14 members of staff in Yorkshire Libraries and Information. These differences reflect both the variety of ways in which RLSs are run and the different range of services offered. Some operate services themselves while others co-ordinate or contract out service provision. The Department believes that it is possible to operate efficient services through a variety of different models and it is up to individual RLSs and their members to decide how they offer the best value for money.
- 2.9 Regional Library Systems are funded by a mixture of subscription and income generation. The budgets of RLSs vary dramatically. These range from EMRLS with a budget of a little over £30,000 per year to LASER with a total of over £2.2 million per year.
- 2.10 Some RLSs have a core basic subscription to cover residual functions. Many RLSs levy a subscription for public library members based on the population of the area. Some also have charges based on more or less complex formulae that include calculations for transport, interlibrary loans and other different services based on use. Some operate different subscriptions systems for public libraries and academic or special libraries, recognising the different extent to which they may use interlending services.
- 2.11 There is concern that the level of subscriptions that members pay should be kept as low as possible. Many are reluctant to pay for work beyond basic services such as interlending, making it difficult for RLSs to undertake strategic and developmental work. And many individual library members are concerned about the level of charges or subscriptions needed to support the range of more strategic activities undertaken by some of the more developed RLSs.
- 2.12 Although it is understandable that members often only want to pay subscriptions towards the operational services that they use directly, the Department believes that this substantially hinders the development of an authoritative and coherent regional library voice. Regional Library Systems who want to undertake strategic work and raise the importance of the regional agenda have therefore had to rely on raising outside funds for specific projects, often in partnership with individual members. Some RLSs, in particular Information North, LASER, and WMRLS, have succeeded in generating a substantial amount of extra revenue to carry out activities beyond the provision of core services. As well as raising income by offering additional self-financing services, they have attracted outside funding for research or development projects in their regions. For example, ten library authorities in the WMRLS region have been awarded nearly £325,000 from the DCMS/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund for a MultiNet project to link libraries across the region and share services and resources. Information North has also received funding from the DCMS/Wolfson Fund towards their project which networks 284 libraries in the region as a managed Intranet, providing public access to services including community information, education providers, local history, business information and local authority services.
- 2.13 Libraries are well placed to take advantage of several potential new sources of funding. Many of these will help support the vision outlined in the Library and Information Commission

(LIC) 1998 report "Building the New Library Network".² The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) will provide three funding streams in support of a Public Library Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Network linking all UK public libraries to the National Grid for Learning. In addition to streams of £20 million to train library staff in ICT and £50 million to create digital content for the network, on which application guidance has already been published, £200 million will be available for a Community Access to Lifelong Learning programme. This will support the development of network infrastructure and also help develop Community Grids for Learning, particularly those which combat social exclusion and benefit those who face obstacles to learning. The Chancellor of the Exchequer also announced that the Government's Capital Modernisation Fund would provide £470 million toward the creation of 1000 IT based learning centres and that libraries should be among the organisations benefiting from this funding. Over the past three years, the DCMS/Wolfson Foundation Challenge Fund has supported a range of IT projects in public libraries. The Fund will be extended to 2002, although with a different focus. As other major funding sources which can help develop the library network are coming on stream, the Challenge Fund will be refocused from 2000-2001 to concentrate on projects that support reader development and that help to create and enhance history collections in libraries. The size and range of these funding opportunities provide huge scope for libraries and it is crucial that RLSs should be able to advise their members and co-ordinate activity in their areas.

Recommendation (iii) – There are likely to be funding implications associated with the drive to tackle strategic issues at regional level. RLSs are encouraged to explore the options available to them in order to obtain any additional resources that may be required. In the longer term, MLAC may wish to support projects that encourage cross-sectoral strategic work.

² "Building the New Library Network", Library and Information Commission, 1998. This followed the Commission's 1997 report "New Library: the People's Network".

Section 3: Interlibrary Lending and Other Services

- 3.1 From the 1930s to the present day, the core function of Regional Library Systems has been to facilitate the interlending of books and other materials between all types of libraries. However, it is possible that the development of national systems and networking will make the physical location of materials less important, diminishing the need for regional interlending as it currently exists.
- 3.2 Interlibrary lending is facilitated through various schemes including such services as:
- union and specialist catalogues;
 - van delivery services;
 - co-ordinated arrangements for joint purchasing; and
 - resources to support specialist collections and fiction reserves.
- 3.3 New technology is already an important part of interlibrary lending and future developments will increase the possibilities for sharing information electronically. The Unity Combined Regions Database is used by NWRLS, YLI, EMRLS, Information North and SWRLS. The VISCOUNT online system is used by WMRLS and LASER, which manages the network, and is available on-line and via CD. On a wider scale, UNiverse is a European funded project with an overall aim of creating a Europe-wide network of connected catalogues using the Z39.50 protocol for distributed searching. The system is based around the Virtual Union Catalogue. It will be used to develop services such as interlibrary lending and document supply using standard protocol and there will be scope for collaborative cataloguing and record supply. The project has 19 partners in six European member states and 50 libraries are involved. The UK Special Interest Group for UNiverse includes the British Library, LASER and the Universities of Sheffield, York, Leeds, Hull and Bradford.
- 3.4 The British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC) plays an important role in supporting interlibrary lending across the country. For example, in LASER, 91.3% of serials and 30% of monographs supplied to members were received from the BLDSC. LASER members themselves supplied 5.6% of serials and 61% of monographs within the region. Other material was supplied by libraries outside the region and internationally. The overall success rate of items supplied to members was 92%.
- 3.5 The way in which interlibrary lending and transportation services are organised varies considerably between regions. Some regions contract out services or operate a collaborative system where members themselves run services. For example, EMRLS has only a small budget and staff and relies on in-kind contributions from its members. Interlibrary lending in the region is facilitated via a free interlending form and a set of agreed standards and its transport scheme is run by Leicestershire County Council. In comparison, some RLSs maintain, operate and staff a full interlibrary lending and transport scheme on behalf of their members. Yorkshire Libraries and Information focuses on facilitating interlibrary lending in the region and is staffed by a manager and a further thirteen staff, operating a transport

network with two vehicles. The British Library announced that from October 1999 the new contract for the delivery of material from the BLDSC in Boston Spa would be awarded by competitive tender. Some RLSs submitted bids for this but the BLDSC did not decide to award any contracts to RLSs.

- 3.6 Figures for interlibrary lending have shown steady decreases in recent years. This is thought to reflect the general fall in borrowing from libraries, the decline in the bookstock in many areas, the lack of resources in libraries to staff interlending services, the lack of promotion of interlending services and the effect of new technologies in providing access to a wider range of material.
- 3.7 Regional Library Services also operate reserve collections and co-operative acquisition schemes in areas such as fiction, music, regional material and other specialist collections. The Subject Specialisation Scheme was established in 1948 for non-fiction titles appearing in the British National Bibliography. Under the Scheme, libraries contribute by purchasing new books in specific subject areas. The Scheme was reviewed in 1998 to compare coverage and address gaps in purchase. The Provincial Joint Fiction Reserve Scheme was set up in 1962. Each region is allocated a section of the alphabet and individual libraries purchase and conserve fiction by their allocation of authors. Such arrangements both maximise resources for members and can provide a better and more complete service for users. RLSs can also play a valuable role in facilitating joint or consortium purchase arrangements. The EARL consortium for Public Library Networking has secured arrangements that allow partners discounts on a variety of products, including on-line information resources.
- 3.8 Regional Library Systems also contribute by offering a range of other operational services for their members that can be organised more efficiently and effectively at a regional level. Some of these are included in subscriptions and others are paid for directly by users. Some RLSs operate training courses on issues such as interlending and ICT and organise seminars and exhibitions. RLSs also provide newsletters and updates for their members, informing them of relevant information, projects and issues. Some produce publications on particular areas of interest or collections in their regions. They also collect information from their members about numbers of interlibrary loans, speed of supply and other data. Many RLSs have already begun to consult their members about what services they value and what support they think RLSs should offer in the future.
- 3.9 All RLSs participate to a greater or lesser extent in co-operative projects and partnerships, both within their region and with others. Each region is involved in NEWSPLAN, a co-operative scheme for newspaper preservation and access. NEWSPLAN has submitted a bid, co-ordinated by LINC and the British Library, to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the completion of work to preserve the nation's local newspapers on microfilm for use in local libraries and archives and in the British Library. Regional Library Systems also participate in schemes such as CILLA, the Indic languages co-operative purchase and cataloguing scheme organised by LASER. Various surveys and reports on a range of subjects have been produced and work to implement these has been undertaken, illustrating the important link between developmental work and its role in the implementation of operational services.

Recommendation (iv) – It is for individual RLSs and their members to decide what services should be offered and how these should be funded but they should exploit the opportunities for providing services in partnership with other RLSs or other cultural agencies. As demand for traditional interlibrary lending services changes, RLSs should also consider alternative ways to encourage cooperation and access to resources through new technologies

Section 4: Strategic Role

- 4.1 Some regional library systems have already begun to develop a strategic agenda by, for example, addressing research and development needs. This helps them to provide advice and guidance to their members and formulate agreed strategies for the region. As libraries are asked to contribute to regional and national strategies, it will be increasingly important for regional library bodies to work with their members to develop their own strategies on these issues. Such strategies can then be used as a basis to develop new initiatives in particular areas and inform future service provision.
- 4.2 It is not only the larger and more developed RLSs that can develop an effective strategic role. For example, EMRLS has agreed a series of policies, strategies and standards in areas such as information and communications technology (ICT), regionalism, stock retention and training. These are used to set out a framework and guide future service provision.
- 4.3 Some RLSs have taken their strategic role further to look in a more holistic way at library provision in their region. For example, LASER is in the process of developing strategic plans which look at: access, non-book materials and music, and networking between public libraries in London and the South East. LASER's access strategy aims to provide as many people as possible with a comprehensive range of resources, materials and services and to make them available in the most efficient and economic ways. It provides for increased co-operation and collaborative arrangements, networking and sharing of resources. The strategy for music and non-book materials includes the development of a networked database, interlending and electronic requesting services, a networking strategy and a collections policy for this area. Following the "Building the New Library Network" report, LASER has also begun discussions in the area of collaborative content creation and digitisation. LASER also runs EARL, the Consortium for Public Library Networking. EARL promotes the role of public libraries in providing information services across the network and offers support to member libraries. As well as its advocacy role for libraries, EARL raises awareness of current developments, demonstrates prototype networked services and provides advice and support through a programme of events, including workshops and discussions.
- 4.4 Many RLSs have developed websites, enabling members and the public more generally to obtain information about the organisation and the services it offers. Some have also been involved in broader Internet based projects. Information North has been working with the Northern Informatics partnership to develop a Regional Information Service, funded through the European Fourth Framework Programme. The Service's website, "www.thenortheast.com", is a directory of web based information on the area and provides a free enquiry service for local people. Once it has been fully established, Information North will take over the management of the Service from Northern Informatics. The Service will be based on the existing public library network of service points and will also include closed access networks for some areas, such as health.
- 4.5 In some regions, libraries have moved away from the traditional Regional Library System role towards a development agency model. LASER and Information North work as development

agencies whilst still running more traditional operations and services. In the West Midlands, WMRLS will from 1 April 2000 be reestablished as The Libraries Partnership with a new constitution and a range of strategic, developmental and operational aims. In the East of England and London, separate development agencies have been established in addition to the existing Regional Library Services. The recently created East of England Library Development Agency includes public libraries and higher education. It is intended to provide an effective voice for libraries in the region and to represent the sector on the Regional Cultural Consortium, play an effective role in implementing the East of England RDA Economic Strategy and inform the development of the Regional Chamber. In London, the London Library Development Agency has been established to undertake advocacy and promotional work.

- 4.6 There are also other options for creating a strategic focus for advice in each region. For example, the Library Association has a branch structure that is almost co-terminous with the RDA and Government Office boundaries. It is possible that these branches could be built up and developed to provide advice and information to the RCCs and others on library matters.

Recommendation (v) – There is an increasing need for strategic and developmental work for the library and information sector at regional level. Libraries in each region need to consider whether the RLS, a library development agency, Library Association branch or other bodies are best placed to take on this strategic role

Section 5: Links to Other Bodies

Government

- 5.1 Regional Library Services are increasingly called upon to act as representatives of, or spokespersons for, libraries in their area. This is particularly so with the establishment of Regional Cultural Consortia (see below). RLSs are also asked to provide advice to other parts of Government, including Government Offices for the Regions, Regional Development Agencies, the Department for Culture Media and Sport and other central Government departments. The Regional Development Agencies are drawing up their Regional Economic Strategies and it is important that RLSs are able to work with other regional cultural bodies to ensure that the potential contribution of the cultural sector is properly represented.
- 5.2 As stated elsewhere in this paper, it is therefore crucial that RLSs have a broad membership base and can take a strategic overview of issues affecting libraries in their region.

Regional Cultural Consortia

- 5.4 Many local authorities have moved towards more integrated structures for the delivery of cultural, leisure, tourism and education services. They are encouraged to produce local cultural strategies in which library services will be included. This enables them to pursue shared objectives such as promoting access and education and maximise the contribution they can make to broader objectives such as tackling social inclusion, cutting crime and improving health.
- 5.5 Such cross-sectoral working is still at a relatively early stage of development at a regional level and links with other cultural bodies are weak in some areas. The existing regional cultural fora have helped bring together the different sectors, often for the first time. The new Regional Cultural Consortia will improve these links by producing joint strategies and encouraging the sharing of information and development of collaborative projects.
- 5.6 However, the establishment of the Regional Cultural Consortia has brought to a head existing concerns over issues such as geographical boundaries and the ability of RLSs to act as regional representatives. This highlights the need for libraries to be absolutely clear about how their interests should be taken forward at a regional level. The key question is what kind of body is best placed to represent the views of the library sector and develop partnerships and joint working. In some cases, this will be the existing RLSs but in others it may be the newly established separate library development agencies, improved RLSs or some other form of representative body.

Recommendation (vi) – Libraries should be represented on RCCs by bodies based in their geographical area, who can speak for a broad spectrum of libraries in the region, and who can take a strategic view of priorities and opportunities for the sector

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

- 5.7 In particular, RLSs will need to consider how to develop their relationships with analogous bodies in the museums and archives field and with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC) once it is established. Many RLSs are already in discussion with colleagues in

Area Museum Councils and regional archive groundbreakers to consider possible future options. There are many possible opportunities, from exchanging information and experience, to providing joint services in areas such as IT and training, to the development of joint projects and sharing staff and accommodation.

- 5.8 The Museums and Galleries Commission currently has a role in providing funding for and agreeing objectives with Area Museums Councils, while the Library and Information Commission does not have a direct relationship with RLSs. MLAC will therefore need to consider what its role should be in relation to the sector at the regional level. This will depend on the views of the Chairman, Board and Chief Executive. However, it seems likely that MLAC will want to encourage increased regional co-operation between museums, archives and libraries. This will help to ensure that there are mechanisms in place which enable MLAC to translate much of its national level work to a regional level.

Recommendation (vii) – There should be greater strategic and co-operative working between libraries and museums and archives at a regional level. RLSs need to formulate clear policies on this and develop relationships with MLAC and with corresponding regional bodies in the museums and archives sector

Other Library Bodies

- 5.9 There is scope for greater co-operation between Regional Library Systems, both bi-laterally and as a whole. The Circle of Officers of National and Regional Library Services (CONARLS) has members who are the Directors or Managers of the seven English Regional Library Systems, the National Library of Scotland Inter-Library Services, Cydfecthyca Cymru (Interlending Wales), A Chomhairle Leabharlanna (The Library Council) of the Republic of Ireland, the Library and Information Co-operation Council and the British Library. CONARLS aims to support, encourage and assist the development of the interlibrary lending network and all forms of interlibrary co-operation.
- 5.10 LINC (the Library and Information Co-operation Council) was established in 1989 as a successor organisation to the former National Committee for Regional Library Co-operation. Its foundation members are the seven English Regional Library Systems, the National Library of Scotland, Cydfecthyca Cymru, A Chomhairle Leabharlanna, LISC (NI), the British Library and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (as observer). A range of library organisations and specialist groups are also subscribing members or affiliates. LINC's aims are to manage co-operative activities between library and information services, offer advice to Government on library co-operation issues and influence policy in this area.
- 5.11 There are a variety of areas that can benefit from the development of cross-regional expertise. For example there are further opportunities to develop and co-ordinate guidance, training programmes, cataloguing systems and joint purchasing arrangements. LINC and CONARLS have played a valuable role in facilitating library co-operation. They have undertaken research and published guidance on issues such as standards for interlibrary lending.
- 5.12 However, the existence of LINC and CONARLS as two separate bodies may create confusion and duplication of effort. The lack of a single strong national focus for libraries at a regional level could hinder their ability to work with national bodies and the establishment of MLAC will make this increasingly important. The current national groupings of Regional Library

Systems also lack a high status, and do not have dedicated members of staff or the ability to undertake substantial pieces of independent work. In contrast, the Committee of Area Museum Councils has provided a clear point of contact for AMCs at a national level and the National Council on Archives will be able to represent the new regional archive structures

Recommendation (viii) – Regional Library Systems should consider how to develop the ~~work~~ cur undertaken by CONARLS and LINC, and ~~investig~~ the possibility ~~of~~ merging the two bodies, to create a strong single voice and a national focus ~~and~~ ~~expertise~~ for the ~~regions~~

Section 6: The Consultation Process

6.1 We would welcome comments on the ideas set out in this paper. Our long term aim is that services for libraries at a regional level should develop in such a way that they meet the challenges of the new regional agenda and ensure that libraries can best benefit from future opportunities.

6.2 Comments should be sent by 5 January 2000 to:

Kevin Jackson
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Ground Floor
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

Telephone 0171 211 6126

Fax 0171 211 6130

E-mail kevin.jackson@culture.gov.uk

Section 7: Appendices

Appendix A – Background to DCMS's Regional Agenda

There have been four main developments that have affected the importance of DCMS's involvement in the regions. They are:

- the Comprehensive Spending Review;
- the establishment of DCMS posts in the regions;
- Regional Cultural Consortia; and
- the creation of MLAC.

Outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review

The Department for Culture Media and Sport conducted a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) of its activities in 1998. At the end of July, it published the outcome of the CSR in "A New Approach to Investment in Culture" and invited comments on a range of proposals. These proposals included taking a broader view of the Department's sectors and, in particular, increasing delegation to the regions. This reflected the importance of the regions under the Government's new constitutional agenda and recognised the economic importance of DCMS sectors. However, the administration of DCMS sectors in the regions is fragmented and many decisions are still taken at national level. A key objective was therefore to provide a more coherent and effective regional voice for the Department's cultural and economic sectors.

The existing Regional Library Systems form a well organised but voluntary structure for libraries. The CSR therefore set out the aim of:

"ensuring that the public library system operated more effectively at the regional level".

To achieve this, the Department sought views on the proposal:

"to develop a stronger regional library structure encouraging all libraries within a region to work together and which embeds public libraries within the emerging regional cultural and economic structures".³

It was proposed that a strong regional library structure could provide:

- a regional focus of expertise and a single coherent and efficient source of advice to other regional and central bodies;
- a mechanism for implementing a regional library and information strategy, involving cross-sectoral co-operation and co-ordination, marketing and the promotion of services, co-ordinated acquisition, IT development, and co-ordination of policies for preservation, conservation, dispersal and disposal; and
- a focus for considering Lottery applications with a library element.⁴

³ "The Comprehensive Spending Review: A New Approach to Investment in Culture" Department for Culture Media and Sport, July 1998.

⁴ *ibid.*

Following the consultation process on the proposals that came out of the CSR, the Department published “A New Cultural Framework” in December 1998, setting out the responses received and decisions taken. There was almost unanimous support for the proposal to strengthen Regional Library Systems and it was announced that the Department would encourage the development of regional structures for libraries and archives.⁵

Establishment of DCMS Posts in the Regions

The CSR announced that a new Division within DCMS has been established to co-ordinate regional and local authority relationships, as well as European and international business. It was also announced that, for the first time, the Department would have staff in each of the nine Government Offices in the regions. This will allow local authorities and regional bodies to have much more direct communication with the Department than before. These staff took up their posts in the summer of 1999. They will initially act as the secretariat for the Regional Cultural Consortiums.

Regional Cultural Consortiums

Many of the Department’s areas of work are represented in the regions by a range of structures. As well as the Regional Library Systems, there are also Regional Arts Boards, Area Museums Councils, Regional Tourist Boards, and regional offices of English Heritage and Sport England. As part of the CSR, the Department has also asked the National Council on Archives to help develop regional arrangements which will raise the profile of the archive sector, address strategic issues for the sector and ensure that its voice is heard in the developing regional structures.

Each region had already established an informal grouping of regional bodies, called a regional cultural forum, to act as a focus for discussion. The CSR proposed increased emphasis on regional bodies and sought views on a range of options, from strengthening the existing regional cultural fora to the establishment of one new executive body for the Department’s sectors. Responses to these proposals expressed strong support for libraries and archives representation on regional cultural fora. Library respondents were divided between creating a new body from those already in existence and creating a new cross-sectoral executive body. The Department announced that it would build on the foundations already laid by the regional cultural fora to establish a new strategic body in each region which will draw in representation from a wide range of interests including local government and the creative industries.

In January 1999, the Department issued a consultation paper on the establishment of these new strategic bodies, the Regional Cultural Consortiums. Following this consultation, a Framework document was issued in the summer. This describes the proposed scope, membership, selection procedures, working methods, organisation and funding of the Consortiums. The Consortiums will be established as independent advisory bodies, with Chairs appointed, at least initially, by the Secretary of State. DCMS has committed £25,000 over the next three years to each Consortium as a contribution to its set-up costs. The Department will also be making available funds towards the cost of preparing regional cultural strategies. It is expected that additional resources, including staff time, will be contributed by participating organisations.

⁵ “A New Cultural Framework: Decisions from the Departmental Spending Review and Funding Allocations 1999-2002” Department for Culture, Media and Sport, December 1998.

The Framework Document says that the Consortium should seek to cover all cultural and creative interests in the region and its Board members should be representative of and accountable to the region. Members are appointed to serve the interests of the cultural sectors as a whole. Each Consortium will have between 15 and 25 members, including members nominated by regional cultural agencies and local government, and representatives of other sectors such as the creative industries and the voluntary sector. As well as the Board members, it is envisaged that a second tier of senior officials from regional bodies will take forward the work of the Consortium, preparing papers, exchanging and collecting information, conducting or commissioning research, and drafting the regional cultural strategy. The Consortia will work to the same boundaries as the Government Offices for the Regions.

The Consortia will:

- provide a single focal point and voice for cultural and creative interests in each region;
- help to deliver the Department's aims of access, excellence, education, social inclusion and regeneration, and promoting the creative industries; and
- help those with responsibility for delivering the wider Government agenda, such as Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), by providing a clear picture of priorities for cultural development in their region.

The preparation of strategies will be a key role for the Consortia. Their aims are to:

- set agreed cultural priorities and themes and reconcile competing demands;
- show how DCMS aims relating to access, excellence, education, social inclusion and regeneration, and promoting the creative industries are being implemented and achieved at regional level;
- develop links with national policies, such as social inclusion and sustainable development, the regional strategies of National Departmental Non-Departmental Public Bodies and others, and the cultural strategies of local authorities;
- contribute to RDA economic strategies and Lottery Distributors' strategies; and
- assist members organisations in obtaining funding for particular policies, activities and projects.

The existing regional cultural fora have been preparing framework documents to feed into the development of the RDAs. The Consortia will build on these framework documents and existing sectoral strategies.

Creation of MLAC

The CSR also recognised the common ground that exists between museums, galleries, archives and libraries. The Department invited views on the case for establishing a new strategic body to replace the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Library and Information Commission. The proposal attracted a large number of comments and responses were divided. A majority of responses supported the proposal, with more responses from the library sector in favour of a cross-sectoral body and more from the museum sector against the idea. The Department believed that the arguments for bringing together the two sectors are sound and announced that a new body, provisionally called the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC), would be established by 1 April 2000. The Chairman has been appointed, the Chief Executive and other Board appointments will be made soon.

Appendix B – Comparative Table of Regional Library Systems

	No. of members	No. of Staff	Management Structure	Total budget (1999/00)	Fees and charges (1999/00)	Interloans within region (LISU 1998)	Items transported (1998/99)
North Western RLS	50 (21 public, 19 academic, 10 special)	8	Company Ltd by G'tee Registered Charity Executive Committee elected by AGM	£285,098	Usage figures for previous year year used to allocated subscription income between members Public libraries £3,483 plus £2.67 per unit Academic/Special £672	24,918	118,460
East Midlands RLS	42 (13 public, 25 academic, 4 special)	2 half-time	Registered Charity Regional Council	£39,410	Public libraries £5 per 1000 pop. University libraries £50 Others £15 Plus in-kind contributions from members	23,600	206,000
West Midlands RLS	22 (14 public, 8 university)	3.5 + 2 temp	Voluntary Association/Co-operative Managed by AGM (22 Chief Librarians) Executive Committee elected by AGM	£302,000	Public libraries £22 per 1000 pop. University libraries £500 p.a. Transport charged on voucher system	10,733	81,000 vouchers (excludes BLDSC)
Information North	38 (13 public, 15 college, 5 industrial, 5 learned societies)	4	Registered Charity Executive Committee (Chief Librarians and other representatives) Development Sub-Committee Honorary Officers	£140,000	Public libraries charged according % of the region's pop. in their area University libraries £2,585 Plus additional charges for R&D, transportation and Interlibrary Loans	12,787	61,838
Yorkshire Libraries and Information	32 (15 public, 8 university, 9 medical)	14	Contracted to Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Council (local authorities and other members) Management Committee (professional members)	£546,399	£250 per member Plus charge for use of service (calculated as difference between expenditure and income, based on members usage of the service)	18,231	158,680
LASER	69 (54 public, 1 academic, 14 special)	11.5 + 4 EARL staff	Company Ltd by Guarantee Registered Charity Board of Directors (15 members) Advisory Panel (11 members)	£2,210,773	Public libraries per 1000 head of population, from: (according to type of authority) £12.95 – £25.91 Plus credits and debits for items borrowed and lent. Subscribing members £379 and debit and credit for ILL use Other services charged according to type	76,947	782,000
South Western RLS	75 (22 public, 41 college and 12 special)	7	Registered Charity Regional Council (heads of libraries) Executive Committee (34 members) Honorary Officers	£229,900	Public Libraries: £29.50 per 1000 pop. Academic and Special libraries £54 Plus unit charge of 4.43p per monograph borrowed within the RLS. Borrowing/lending adjustment of £1.60	57,332	285,153

North Western Regional Library System

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS
50. Consisting of 21 Public Library Authorities, 19 Academic Institutions, 10 Special libraries.
2. NUMBER OF STAFF
8 Staff
Company Secretary
Customer Liaison Officer/Deputy Company Secretary
Information Officer
Company Accountant
Co-ordinator ILL
Senior ILL Officer
ILL Officer
Administrative Assistant
3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
Company limited by guarantee, registered charity, A company controlled by local authorities.

Executive Committee

Elected officers:

Chairman
Deputy Chairman
Honorary Treasurer
Administrative Director

Elected Members:

Two representatives of public libraries in Cheshire County
Two representatives of public libraries in Lancashire County
Three representatives of public libraries in Greater Manchester other than Manchester Metropolitan District Council
Two representatives of public libraries in Merseyside other than Liverpool Metropolitan District Council
Two representatives of Academic Libraries
Two representatives of special libraries
One representative of public libraries in Liverpool City
One representative of Public Libraries in Manchester City

New unitary authorities are collectively allocated one seat and hold a ballot to determine representation. NW Unitaries: Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Halton Lee and Warrington.

4. TOTAL BUDGET

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Total income	£272,499	£285,098	£297,686
Total costs	£275,525	£273,602	£296,867
Surplus/(deficit)	(£3,026)	£11,496	£819

5. FEES AND CHARGES

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Subscriptions	£131,017	£138,417	£142,946
Sales-transport	£122,055	£125,041	£128,669
Sales-other	£5,012	£3,827	£2,088
Contributions	£1,280	nil	£5,333
Bank interest	£13,135	£17,813	£18,650
Totals	£272,499	£285,098	£297,686

6. NUMBER OF INTERLIBRARY LOAN TRANSACTIONS

29,918

7. NUMBER OF ITEMS TRANSPORTED

	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Between NWRLS members	50,132	46,399	45,751
Returned loans to BLDSC	39,143	38,433	37,849
To libraries in other regions	18,987	18,747	17,765
From libraries in other regions	14,388	14,881	14,006
Total	122,650	118,460	115,371

8. OTHER SERVICES

Range of Services:

Interlending – NWRLS is committed to the provision of an effective interlibrary lending ILL system which resulted in the investment in the development of the Unity Combined Regions Database.

Transport – NWRLS provides an interlibrary transport scheme to ensure savings on postal costs. The scheme serves all members of the System and visits BLDSC twice weekly and links into the inter-regional transport schemes.

Developing a National Interlending System for Visually Impaired People . Proposal to the Library and Information Commission. This proposal has now been accepted.

Database management – NWRLS operates a rolling programme for the extraction of member library catalogues to ensure that the Unity database is as comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date as possible by identifying, extractive loading and updating all relevant computerised library catalogues extant in the North West. As part of a survey collating information on the resources available in the Region, NWRLS is identifying rare and unique material in uncatalogued reserved/special collections with a view to future inclusion in Unity.

NWRLS Code of Practice – NWRLS' commitment to providing quality services is supported by the adoption of a Code of Practice which seeks to establish standards in levels of service and requirements for effective inter-library lending to take place.

Training and Support Services – Guides and handbooks are provided and maintained on all aspects of ILL. NWRLS runs a help desk. NWRLS actively supports its members by arranging user groups, training and relevant seminars.

Groups:

NW European Information Group – established 1997, bringing together representatives from NWRLS, NW Network of European Relays, Government Office for the NW and other regional and local bodies to exchange experience and promote an effective co-ordinated approach to EU information provision in the region.

NW Open Learning Group – NWRLS has established a North West Open Learning Group to implement a programme of events to support open learning service providers within the Region.

NEWSPLAN – The NEWSPLAN North West Report (1990) has now been revised. Over 100 new titles have been identified and all preservation work undertaken in the interim is being recorded. The resulting database will be published on the Internet.

NW Libraries ICT Forum – The Forum aims to:

- Exchange knowledge and experience of ICT projects and products
- Prevent reduplication of effort
- Share technological resources regionally (e.g. via a regional intranet)
- Develop collaborative ICT projects (e.g. content creation, digitisation)
- North West libraries to assess/negotiate en bloc for online products
- Help develop best practice and establish standards
- Publicise the ICT work of North West libraries as a whole

Other support groups include: NW Music Librarians Group, Inter-library Lending Group, Unity users Group, Alternative Formats Group

Publications – Annual Report, newsletter, NW Union Catalogue of Vocal Sets and various publications as part of the bibliography of NW England Series.

9. WEB SITE ADDRESS

www.nwrls.org.uk

10. CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER

Tel: 0161 234 1947 Fax: 0161 236 3813

E-mail: nwrls@nwrls.bdx.co.uk

East Midlands Regional Library System

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS
42. Consisting of 13 public libraries, 23 academic libraries and 4 special libraries.
2. NUMBER OF STAFF
Two part time staff. A Regional Librarian and a Regional Assistant.
3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
EMRLS is a Registered Charity. Its Regional Council consists of: Chief Librarians or deputies of the subscribing public library authorities in the region, the Director of the British Library Bibliographic Services and Document Supply, or representative, and four librarians from non-public libraries, or their deputies.
4. TOTAL BUDGET
£39,410. This figure is slightly higher than usual due to UNITY CD Rom sales, the budget is normally around £30,000.
5. FEES/CHARGES
Public libraries are charged £5 per 1000 head of population. University libraries are charged £50 plus a unit charge for location information. Other libraries are charged £15. The system relies heavily on in-kind contributions from members.
6. NUMBER OF ILL TRANSACTIONS
23,600
7. NUMBER OF ITEMS TRANSPORTED
The transport scheme, which is run by Leicestershire County Council, has over fifty customers within the region and dealt with 206,000 items in 1998/99.
8. OTHER SERVICES
NEWSPLAN – Recent projects have included and update and index to the original EMRLS NEWSPLAN report of 1989, consideration of the Smethurst Review and participation in the national NEWSPLAN bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
CILLA – EMRLS participates in CILLA, the Indic language co-operatives scheme organised by LASER.
Publications – *Annual Report; Music for Choirs (1997)*
East Midlands Playset Lists (1997)
9. WEBSITE ADDRESS
None
10. CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER
Tel: 01473 584 556 Fax: 01473 584 549
alison.wheeler@libher.suffolkcc.gov.uk

West Midlands Regional Library System

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS

22. Consisting of 14 public and 8 university – 100% in each of these parts of the LIS domain in the region. Others not able to join but welcome to the Forum and some involved in “Futures Together”

2. NUMBER OF STAFF

3.5 permanent

Director (f/t)

Regional Projects Officer (f/t)

Administrative Officer (f/t)

Support Officer (p/t)

2 temporary

Regional Libraries Telematics Officer (on secondment from Walsall, funded by SCL-WM)

Futures Together Research Assistant (on 2 year contract financed from LIC grant).

3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Voluntary Association/Co-operative managed by AGM (Chief Librarians x 22 as above) with Executive Committee elected by AGM.

4. TOTAL BUDGET

5 year spread to nearest £1K

1995-6

Income £279K Expenditure £275K Surplus £4K Reserves £28K

1996-7

Income £257K Expenditure £274K Deficit £17K Reserves £11K

1997-8

Income £291K Expenditure £288K Surplus £3K Reserves £14K

1998-9

Income £356K Expenditure £348K Surplus £8K Reserves £22K

1999-0 (projected)

Income £302K Expenditure £302K Surplus £0K Reserves £22K

5. FEES/CHARGES

Public Library subscriptions at £17 per 1,000 (1995-6) rising to £22 per 1,000 (1999-0) net of refunds for items & sets supplied.

University Library subscriptions at a flat rate rising from £0.4K (1995-6) to £0.5K (1999-0).

Transport charged on voucher system per item carried ranging from £1.23p for regional/BLDSC returns to £1.45p for inter-regional (up from about £1 level in 1995-6).

SEALS (European Fiction) collections hired out at £1.2K per 300 books per year

Telematics “special” contributions levied at flat rate of £2.3K per authority (ie x 14)

Futures Together “special” contributions levied at £0.5K per member (ie x 22)

6. NUMBER OF ILL TRANSACTIONS

10,733

7. NUMBER OF ITEMS TRANSPORTED

Only figures are for number of vouchers sold = 81,000 which includes intra-regional movements (items sent to WMRLS members), inter-regional movements (items sent to users of other English Transport Schemes) and returns to BLDSC; in the WM no BLDSC deliveries have been made since 11.98 when the scheme was restructured

8. OTHER SERVICES

WMRLS, as a neutral focus for regionally based collaboration, continues to manage a number of longstanding cooperative arrangements and services.

Interlending Support – For public libraries, this is provided through a West Midlands node of VISCOUNT in a partnership agreement between WMRLS and LASER (which manages the network). The service includes on-line bibliographic checking, locating and requesting facilities and there are over 20 access points in the Region. The VISCOUNT database hosts over three million locations for book titles held in West Midlands public and university library systems. Vocal sets are recorded on a separate database maintained and held at WMRLS HQ and including eight public and university collections. Fiction is catered for through the Provincial Joint Fiction Reserve in which WMRLS participates along with other Regions.

Transport – Movement of library materials within and beyond the Region’s borders (including a link to the British Library Document Supply Centre and other English Regions) is negotiated, and contracts are managed, by WMRLS.

Language Materials – The SEALS scheme provides circulating collections of French, German, Italian and Spanish language fiction and bibliographic/promotional support with each public library authority hiring the number of collections it requires. Signposts on the Internet is managed by WMRLS (part-funded by LINC, the Library and Information Cooperation Council), helping librarians to meet the demand for materials in languages other than English.

Partnership Projects – WMRLS is also involved in a wide range of projects in partnership with specialist librarians and other agencies to extend and demonstrate the benefits of collaboration. Much of this work is funded by earmarked contributions or external grants from library and information sector sources.

Futures Together: This is an LIC funded research project, managed by WMRLS, to investigate specialist collections and resources in academic, public and special libraries across the West Midlands with a view to developing new access strategies. It is due to report in February 2000 at a dedicated conference and has already led to collaborative approaches to content development in the region, embracing higher education libraries, museums. Archives and other partners in the cultural and educational sectors as well as public libraries.

Building the Future: Managed by WMRLS for the Society of Chief Librarians (West Midlands) this is a Regional Telematics initiative. It aims to assist all the public libraries of the Region to address the agenda being set by the *New Library: The People's Network* report, and to provide a regional input to EARL. Grants from ERDF and DCMS/Wolfson will bring in £1.4 million for the creation of a broadband infrastructure linked to MidMAN as a result of this project. A strategy for public library ICT (Moving Forward Together) has also been developed and launched at the 3rd Regional Libraries Telematics Conference.

Literature: The Lit-Net website is managed by WMRLS with several of its public library authorities and funded by West Midlands Arts, aiming to be “a virtual literature centre for the West Midlands and beyond”, providing information and resources for writers and readers, librarians and literature workers in the Region. The Developing Together in Literature Promotion programme, now in its 5th year, is coordinated by WMRLS (supported by the Arts Council of England/West Midlands Arts Libraries Fund to equip and training public library staff across the Region).

Strategic representation: The Director of WMRLS represents libraries on the West Midlands heritage and Leisure Agencies Group and the Advantage West Midlands/Government Office West Midlands ICT Steering Group.

Other Specialisms – WMRLS supports specialist regional groups: the Music Librarians Group (music specialists in public and university libraries), the Training Officers Group (covering both sectors), the NEWSPLAN West Midlands Implementation Committee (preservation of and access to the Region's local newspaper collections), the SPICE Group (Ethnic Minority Services and management of the CILLA scheme for the Midlands), and the Public Information Relay Group (European Information).

9. WEBSITE ADDRESS

Website <http://www.wm-libraries.org.uk/wmrls.htm>

Lit-Net <http://www.lit-net.org>

10. CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

Main Office Tel 0121-303-2613

Information North

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS
52. Consisting of 13 public library authorities, 5 university libraries, 24 college libraries, 5 industrial libraries and 5 learned societies.
2. NUMBER OF STAFF
4. Manager, assistant librarian, library assistant and driver. IN also contracts with, or sub-contracts to, independent consultants in furtherance of its own operational objectives or in order to complete external commissions.
3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE
IN is a Registered Charity (as Northern Regional Library System) No. 529874.

Management

Executive Committee: comprises the Chief Librarian of each public and university library, one learned society Librarian, one (representative) industrial Librarian and one (representative) College Librarian. The School of Information Studies at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle and the British Library Bibliographic Services and Document Supply have Observer status.

Development Sub-Committee: considers future policy and new initiatives and reports to Executive Committee.

Honorary Officers: Chair, Vice Chair and Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. The Chair alternates between public and academic librarians.

4. TOTAL BUDGET
£140,000
5. FEES/CHARGES
There is a core subscription of £2,585 (in 1999/2000) charged to each public and university library. The public library amounts are cumulated and reapportioned according to population. There are additional charges, based on use, for R&D, Transportation and Interlibrary Loans.
6. NUMBER OF ILL TRANSACTIONS
120,787
7. NUMBER OF ITEMS TRANSPORTED
61,838
8. OTHER SERVICES

Document Delivery – Since 1928 IN has managed a regional union catalogue in a number of different formats. It is a contributor to and regional member of Unity, the Combined Regions Database cooperative. IN provides location data to members for their interlibrary loans which cannot be obtained immediately from the British Library Document Supply Centre. Requested

items and loan material are moved around the Region, to and from BLDSC and to other library Regions by IN's Transport Scheme van service – established in 1977 and the first such scheme in the country. Over 120,000 items per annum are carried, and the scheme saves its members more than £150,000 each year.

In addition to its basic document delivery services, IN provides a range of services which are available to its members and to the wider library and information community at local, regional, national and international level:

Research and Development – In the last decade, IN has obtained almost £0.5 million in research and development grants from a number of local, regional and national organisations to carry out region-based or nation-wide research. IN is acknowledged as an expert organisation on a number of key issues.

Consultancy – IN has provided library and information consultancy services to a wide range of organisations including: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Library and Information Commission, British Library Research and Innovation Centre, Library and Information Cooperation Council, Northern Regional Health Authority and Northern Arts.

Conferences, Exhibitions and Events Management – IN has managed for itself and other organisations a wide portfolio of regional, national and international library and information conferences, regional and national information technology exhibitions, and a number of other professional or promotional events – see <http://ilm.unn.ac.uk/pm3>.

Publishing – All of IN's research and development consultancy and conference activity has been reported and published. A full catalogue of publications is available on request.

Information Service – IN maintains databases of Vocal Sources in the Northern Region, Playsets in the Northern Region (both available in published form) and an extensive mailing list (4,000) of library and information individuals and organisations in the UK and Ireland.

Meeting and Forum Facilities – IN coordinates meetings within the Region of NEWSPLAN Northern Region, Northern Interlend and the Newcastle Libraries Joint Working Party. IN attends meetings of Northern Informatics, Unity Cooperative Council, CONARLS and the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel.

9. WEBSITE ADDRESS

Regional Information Service <http://www.thenortheast.com>

Information North <http://www.ris.niaa.org.uk/heritage-north/info-north>

CONARLS <http://www.zebra.co.uk/conarls>

10. CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

Michael Long

Information North, Bolbec Hall, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1SE

Tel: ++44 (0)191 232 0877

Fax: ++44 (0)191 232 0804

Email: michael.long@dial.pipex.com

Yorkshire Libraries and Information

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS

32. Consisting of 15 public libraries, 8 academic libraries and 9 special libraries.

2. NUMBER OF STAFF

14

3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

YLI is a member organisation operated through a Service Contract with Wakefield Metropolitan District Council.

The YLI Council is responsible for determining the policy of YLI. Local Authorities representing public library members are entitled to elect two representatives to Council with all other members entitled to appoint one representative.

The YLI Management Committee is responsible for the day to day operation of YLI. All members are entitled to one representative on the Management Committee.

Both Council and Management Committee have a formal structure with Chair and Deputy Chair and Honorary Secretary. YLI also has an Honorary Treasurer. These are elected on an annual basis.

4. TOTAL BUDGET

£546,399

5. FEES/CHARGES

An annual subscription of £250 per member is payable. In addition the members cover the shortfall between the budget expenditure and budget income, based on their usage of the services.

6. NUMBER OF ILL TRANSACTIONS

18,231

7. NUMBER OF ITEMS TRANSPORTED

	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Between members	14,118	15,085	14,564
From other regions	11,063	10,646	10,065
To other regions	9,572	9,001	8,915
From British Library	103,894	102,286	92,894
Returns to British Library	35,717	35,030	32,242
Total	174,364	172,021	158,680

8. OTHER SERVICES

Interlending Services – All public library members in the Region have their own access to the Unity Combined Regions Database, which provides over nine million records and over 30 million locations.

All requests from academic members and requests for serials are forwarded direct to the British Library Document Supply Centre (BLDSC), usually by automated systems. When BLDSC sources fail, details of requests are circulated to members by fax for final check.

Representational Role – YLI represents the Region at local, national and international levels by playing an active part in the Library and Information Cooperation Council (LINC), CONARLS, Unity Groups and the Forum for Interlending (FIL), and it provides a forum for discussion of and response to documentation from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Library and Information Commission, and the British Library.

Reserve Collections – Maintained at Wakefield, the Reserve Collections form an integral part of the interlending process. They comprise 40,000 volumes of fiction including the N-S section of the Provincial Joint Fiction Reserve and 27,000 children's fiction items. Specialist collections of motor manuals and census returns for 1841-1881 are also held.

Transport Scheme – The transport network delivers daily from headquarters to public library members' central libraries and university libraries. A daily service also operates to BLDSC and links with other regional networks. An estimated 200,000 items are carried annually by the two vehicles operated by YLI.

Healthcare Library Service – The member libraries aim to "aid the process of education and training of all healthcare workers, contributing to the achievement of academic standards and maintenance of competency of patient care, in accordance with locally defined needs". The group members cooperate in joint book purchase, cataloguing, location and inter-lending arrangements.

Music and Drama Section – YLI manages a major collection of over 500,000 music items including part-songs, sets of instrumental parts and multiple copies of vocal scores. Over 90,000 play-texts are in stock comprising over 3,500 sets of one-act plays and 3,500 sets of full-length plays available for loan. The service can be used by libraries outside the Region at a charge.

NEWSPLAN – An active Implementation Committee has compiled a Cumulative Update (1990-95) of the regional NEWSPLAN Report (1990), together with an Index to local newspapers by place. In 1997 the Region was successful in obtaining funding from the Mellon Project to microfilm valuable newspapers. The group contributed to the NEWSPLAN Heritage Lottery bid and is currently looking at placing the NEWSPLAN Reports on the Internet.

Forum on Asian Languages – Representatives meet to discuss the improvement of provision of Asian language and multicultural material within the Region. Among the topics discussed are standard transliterations, literature initiatives, promotion and training.

9. WEBSITE ADDRESS

None

10. CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

Library HQ Switchboard 01924 302210

LASER

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS

69 full members, 54 Public Library, 1 Academic, 14 Special

LASER have other “types” of membership according to the relationship. e.g. c.1000 users of the transport scheme who consider themselves members, 25 additional users of VISCOUNT not in the Region, 40 VISCOUNT CD ROM Users, 60 Co-operative of Indic Language Library Authorities (CILLA) Members. LASER also have a number of ‘casual’ users/members, who use its services on an ad hoc basis c.15-20. LASER is a University of London Company.

2. NUMBER OF STAFF

11.5 FTE. This excludes:-

Electronic Access to Resources in Libraries (EARL) staff – whom LASER employs (4), CILLA staff paid piece rate on a daily basis (10), Any consultants working on special projects (e.g. European Union (EU)). Of the 11.5 FTE c.4 are fully funded from income generating activities.

3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Company Limited by Guarantee. Charitable Status.

Board of Directors with Chair and Deputy Chair. Total Membership of 15, with 6 from University of London, 1 Special, LASER Membership Categories, British Library, Co-options. Advisory Panel with Chair and Deputy Chair. Membership total of 11 representing each type of member.

4. TOTAL BUDGET

Latest figure, turnover £2210,773, surplus 1998-99 £132,636. Trend + 5% on turn over and + 20% on surplus from 97/98.

Breakdown, less than 30% from membership subs. Remainder from other activities e.. CILLA, Transport, Cataloguing, Research and Development etc. Trend. Turnover has increased over last 9 years. Surplus increase over last year (see above), but with one blip the trend has been one of gradual increase.

5. FEES AND CHARGES

Public Libraries per 1000 head of population ranging from (according to type of Authority) £12.95 – £25.91. Also credits and debits for items borrowed and lent. Flat rate £379 for subscribing members and debit and credit ILL use. In addition other services charged according to type.

6. NO OF ILL LOANS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF LASER

76,947

Trends – slight decrease, but LASER investigations and plans predicted this on the basis that:- Electronic delivery is now more common, Public Library Funding is going down, Trends in Public Libraries are switching from reading to purposeful activity.

7. ITEMS TRANSPORTED

782,000 in 98/99

8. OTHER SERVICES

Cataloguing services and Retrospective conversion – Current projects include Garrick, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies (RUSIDS) and Courtauld.

Transport plus specials – Includes Berkshire, London Research Centre (LRC), Association of London Government (ALG), Metropolitan Police and Camden etc.

CD ROM – Regular and One off production.

CILLA Service – Materials in ethnic minority languages (A social inclusion service)

Consultancy – e.g. in last 6 months, British Council in Saudi Arabia, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Bristol.

Training – e.g. Internet, Advanced New Public Library, ILL etc.

Consortia purchase – e.g. Bookdata products, Chadwyck Healey Know UK, OCLC First Search etc.

Research and Development – e.g. EU Contemporary Culture Visual Archives in XML (COVAX), EU People and Resource Identification in Distributed Environments (PRIDE), Library and Information Commission (LIC) Cable Study, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) (Needs Assessment).

Developmental – Visually impaired policy, Music and Non-Book material, Access, Networking – SEEDA, London Networking Strategy etc.

Referral Service

Conferences/Seminars – e.g. Ufi in September etc.

Articles in professional press – Frequent

Membership of major bodies – e.g. London Learning Network Group (LLNG), United Kingdom Online Library Networking Centre (UKOLN), Regional Cultural Consortia, Library Information Co-operation Council (LINC), University for Industry (Ufi), The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), Cultural Strategy Partnership for London, New Opportunities Fund (NOF) pre implementation and other ad hoc groups.

Newsletter – LASERLink and occasional publications e.g. Library and Information Briefings (LIBS), Annual Report, Memorandum, Handbook, Standards, Guidelines, CILLA rules, CILLA Translation, CILLA Bibliography etc. Plus web proceedings of seminars etc.

Seminar programme

Joint Fiction Reserve – Co-operative purchase and retention scheme for English Language fiction since 1948

LASER Subject specialisation scheme – for non fiction material published in UK 1950 onwards

The Internet – LASER are currently training a member of staff as a Web Master. LASER host 6 Web sites at present and will host and manage more.

Projects/ongoing developments:-

NEWSPLAN – LASER was the first to put NEWSPLAN on the Web. LASER are also developing the scheme, they have recently done a survey in the Region of Local Newspaper use and will be promoting it.

Regional Digitisation project and Web presence – Co-ordinating scheme across the region. Web site etc.

Music – Planning a major regional (possibly national) retro/conversion scheme with all LASER libraries

Visually impaired – Recently set up a regional Task Group to promote access across the region.

European Union 5th Framework project – on technological aspect of Museums, Archives, Libraries – successful in June 1999 call – COVAX

Networking – Two regional networking schemes being devised

Non-Book material – Working across the region on access to non-book material.

Access and gap analysis – Working with the British Library (BL) on these aspects. Holding national strategic seminar in November at St Pancras with BL and LINC.

Standards and performance of resource sharing services – Via LASER's Standards Working Party an ILL Standards and performance times. Laser publish monthly performance stats to member libraries on this.

Projects coming on stream:

Digitisation

Electronic Document Delivery

Full Web based access to V3

Authentication

Copyright

Alerting services etc.

Setting up a cross-regional/cross-domain consultative strategic group for Museums and Libraries and Archives. Reciprocal arrangements on relevant Committees being planned.

9. **WEBSITE ADDRESS**

www.viscount.org.uk/laser and also Metrolibs www.viscount.org.uk/metrolib/index.html

10. **CONTACT NUMBERS**

General Enquiries – 0171 702 2020

South Western Regional Library System

1. NUMBER OF MEMBERS

Total 75. Consisting of 22 public libraries, 41 academic libraries and 12 special libraries.

2. NUMBER OF STAFF

Full time equivalents 5.5

People 7

3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Regional Council comprises a senior librarian or sub from all member libraries (meet at AGM)

Executive Committee: 20 public library chiefs, 8 university librarians, an elected member from Bristol CC (host authority, British Library representative (ex-officio); two elected representatives from smaller academics/special libraries, 3 local authority elected members, The Executive Committee elects Honorary Officers (Chair, Vice-Chair, Hon. Sec., Hon. Treasurer) Currently this is two public librarians and two university librarians.

SWRLS holds two meetings a year. SWRLS is a registered charity:

4. TOTAL BUDGET

Total Budget for 1999-2000 of £229,900, an increase of £500 on the previous year. SWRLS tries to keep subscription rises small as the majority of its members have funding difficulties. The transport scheme aims to be self-financing.

5. FEES/CHARGES

Public libraries for 1999-2000: £29.50 per 1,000 population

Academics and special libraries: £54 + unit charge of 4.43p per monograph borrowed from other SWRLS members. SWRLS operates a borrowings and lendings re-adjustment for academics/specials: net borrowers charged further 1.60p on difference between borrowings and lendings. Net lenders receive a credit of 1.60p on the difference.

6. NUMBER OF ILL TRANSACTIONS

Number of Interlibrary Loan Transactions for 1998-99 and trend over 1997-98:

Public libraries borrowed 44,069 (-21%) within SWRLS and loaned 39,516 (-29%) to other SWRLS members.

Public libraries borrowed 17,215 (-0.02%) from British Library and 9,549 (-6%) from other libraries; they loaned 10,547 (-14%) to other libraries.

Academics/special libraries borrowed 1,114 (-15%) from SWRLS members and loaned 8,708 (-12%) to SWRLS members.

They borrowed 95,284 (-5%) from British Library and 13,063 (+14%) from other libraries; they loaned 11,544 (-8%) to other libraries.

7. NUMBER OF ITEMS TRANSPORTED

216,603 (-3.8%)

8. OTHER SERVICES

Interlending – The Unity database takes the full automated datasets of members libraries, which are matched and merged with BNB and BLDSC records. Unity is updated regularly with addition/deletion information sent direct to Talis Information Computing Ltd, the Unity Supplier, or via the SWRLS Office.

Unity provides access to BLDS's ARTTel service. The Unity Electronic Request System, (UERS), which will allow members to make requests to other Unity Users via the Internet, is being developed by Libris.

Available from the Unity Co-ordinating Office are two Unity CD-ROM products: Unity SW CD-ROM which contains bibliographic records with SWRLS locations and BLSDC locations if the same title is held; and the Unity Bronze CD which has ISBN numbers and locations from the eight participating Unity Regions and services.

SWRLS Office staff carry out bibliographic verification and locations finding on behalf of member libraries and will arrange urgent loans if requires.

Transport Service – A transport scheme to exchange inter-library loans on behalf of all local authorities and 16 of the academic and special libraries in membership was set up in 1991. The Consortium for Purchasing and Distribution, based in Trowbridge, runs the scheme on behalf of SWRLS and arranges transportation of loans between participants in the South West Region, the six other regional transport schemes and BLSDC.

Cooperative Acquisitions Schemes:

Plymouth/SWRLS Music Scheme: The scheme was established in 1969 to acquire extra performance sets of music for interlibrary loan. An annual SWRLS grant is made to cover the purchase and binding of sets and to contribute towards staff costs. Devon ran the Scheme, based at Plymouth Music and Drama Library, until April 1998 when Plymouth City Council became a unitary authority.

Subject Specialisation Scheme: SWRLS has supported the scheme since 1959. All public libraries (except Channel Islands) contribute by purchasing new books listed in BNB in specific subject areas. Following a recent review by the Bibliographical Services Officers Group some allocations were amended to take account of Local Government Reorganisation and the advent of Dewey 21. A new Guide and Directory for the Scheme was issued in 1998.

Provincial Joint Fiction Reserve: The scheme was set up in 1962 to ensure the continued availability of out-of-print fiction. Each Region was allocated a section of the alphabet and individual members purchase and conserve fiction by their allocation of authors. SWRLS is responsible for authors beginning T-Z.

SW/CILLA: CILLA, the Cooperative of Indic Languages in Library Authorities, organised by LASER, provides an on-approval book selection service and a forum to assist those providing a service for minority ethnic groups in the London and South East area. A South West group was set up in 1986, the members of which pay a subscription to LASER for the service. The group meets quarterly to select material from the approvals collections and to review the operation of the scheme, comment on the collections, and discuss the development of services for minority ethnic groups within the Region.

NEWSPLAN – The survey and report on the holdings of local newspapers in the South West, carried out by a project officer in 1983/84 in collaboration with the British Library, marked the start of NEWSPLAN, the UK and Ireland cooperative scheme for newspaper preservation and access.

Training and Staff Development – Training, discussions and Unity demonstrations are arranged for member library staff, colleagues from other RLSs and others with an interest in interlending and partnership. SWRLS also assists in City and Guilds courses, other library training and arranges seminars and workshops for member library staff.

Other Working Groups – These are established as the need arises, facilitated by SWRLS staff. Several working groups contribute to the smooth running of projects:

Bibliographical Services Officers Group: advises on all aspects of bibliographical services including the Subject Specialisation Scheme and the fiction reserves;

Music Librarians Group: reviews music services and their development within and outside the Region.

Unity – SW Users Group: plans Unity development in the Region, provides support to interloans staff and feedback to the national groups and Tails to assist in Unity development.

Publications – Annual report, introduction to SWRLS, Newsletter, Directory of Member Libraries, Guides to Transport Scheme and Subject Specialisation Scheme.

9. WEBSITE ADDRESS

None.

10. CONTACT PHONE NUMBER

Central Library, College Green

Bristol BS1 5TL

Tel: +44 (0) 117 927 3962

Fax: +44 (0) 117 923 0216

swrls@ndirect.co.uk

Appendix C – CONARLS Research Project

CONARLS has recently submitted, and had accepted, a bid to the Library and Information Commission (LIC) for funding for a research project “The New Library Regions. Models for New Library Regions: Sectoral Positioning in a Changing Cultural Environment”. The project will be a strategic management review and will take account of recent developments. It will define a minimum standard for a new library region, with transferable lessons than will enable library regions to construct models which take account of different circumstances and priorities.

The CONARLS research project will provide a valuable input to future decisions about the role and organisation of Regional Library Systems. The Department hopes that the research will consider and take forward the issues raised in this paper.