Report of the Review of Library Services

1. Introduction to the Review Process

The non-academic unit review is a review of the operation of those service/administrative units/ departments within the Institute whose work impacts on academic programmes and therefore is an important aspect of the Institute’s commitment to the quality of its educational provision and the student experience. It requires that these areas agree a mission statement and service standards against which performance can be measured, and that feedback from user groups is collected and taken on board.

The purposes of non-academic unit review are to:

- enhance the quality of the service provided;
- promote understanding of particular requirements of individual user groups; and,
- highlight areas that require improvement and further resources and areas where savings could be made.

This is the first review of the Institute’s Library Services.

2. Introduction to Library Services

2.1 History of Library Services

For many years Dublin Corporation provided the library services for the various colleges that merged to form the Dublin Institute of Technology. A more independent library service was established in 1992 although administrative services still were dependent on the Corporation Library Service. In 1998 the DIT Library Services became fully autonomous with the current management structure in place. The following libraries existed at that point:

College of Technology – Kevin Street  
College of Music – Chatham Row  
College of Commerce – Rathmines Road  
College of Marketing and Design – Mountjoy Square  
College of Technology – Bolton Street  
College of Catering – Cathal Brugha Street.

2.2 Current position

At present, Library Services has 7 ‘business units’: 6 libraries at Aungier Street, Bolton Street, Cathal Brugha Street, Kevin Street, Mountjoy Square and Rathmines Road as well as the Central Services Unit (CSU) at Rathmines Road, responsible for collection management and administration. Each library primarily serves the staff and students at its own site although all users have free access to all the libraries and their collections. A seventh library to serve the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre at Upper Mount Street opened in 2001 but closed in September 2009.
Each library provides study spaces, networked PCs, textbooks and other course materials, reference works and journals to support the taught programmes offered and to facilitate research. Altogether, there are more than 350,000 books and other items and nearly 35,000 journal titles in print and/or electronic format. Information is available in many formats besides books e.g. videos, DVDs, maps and music scores.

Electronic resources can be accessed from any networked PC on or off the campus. The entire holdings, their locations and current status are displayed on the Library Catalogue at [http://library.dit.ie](http://library.dit.ie) The Library Services Homepage at [http://www.dit.ie/library/](http://www.dit.ie/library/) provides access to information about Library Services and links to all its electronic resources.

### 2.3 Library Services’ Mission Statement and Strategic/Operational Plan

The Mission of Library Services is as follows:

“We aim to support the learning, teaching and research activity of the Institute by providing the resources, facilities and services in a form, place and time that is most appropriate to our users’ evolving needs.”

The Library Services ‘Strategic/Operational Plan 2008-2010’ was conceived over several months, with the active participation of all library staff and an external facilitator. It is reviewed and updated annually, to monitor its implementation. The plan has four major goals:

**Goal 1:** To develop the support we provide for learning, teaching and research, in line with the evolving needs of our users

**Goal 2:** To develop the current and future library environment and infrastructure, as we move towards Grangegorman

**Goal 3:** To promote effectively our resources, facilities and services for the benefit of our users

**Goal 4:** To continue our commitment to the development of highly trained and motivated staff

Under each of those broad headings there is a small number of focussed objectives and beneath those a greater number of specific actions.

The first review of the plan took place in September 2008 and the second twelve months later. Work had started on most of the actions, many of them had achieved significant outcomes and some were completed. Others had been superseded, a few were delayed due to lack of resources or other activities taking priority.

### 3. Space

#### 3.1 Current space

Full details of the physical spaces occupied by Library Services were provided in the appendices circulated to panel members. There are 7 main library sites, one of them being the Central Services Unit based at Rathmines, as well as the six Faculty libraries. The total number of seats provided across the service is 1645 and with student numbers of 13000 gives a ratio of 8:1.
The library sites cater primarily for the needs of their own user group, therefore space usage at each site is different. However, most have circulation and information desks (usually combined), shelves and other furniture to house the collections, study facilities (mostly individual but some for group study), casual seating, photocopiers and printers (outsourced to Ricoh), open access PCs, WiFi access to DIT networks and the Internet, staff accommodation. The majority have some in-house training facility as well.

Aungier Street Library was completed most recently in 2002 and most of the other libraries have been remodelled or refurbished to some extent since then. However, much of the accommodation is in need of improvement.

In recent years, library staff have worked with colleagues from other DIT departments and the Students' Union to develop a variety of informal learning spaces across the Institute. Known as 'Purple Spaces', these have deliberately been eclectic in design in order to evaluate their different attributes ahead of the move to Grangegorman.

Current staff reductions, delays in moving to Grangegorman and increasing pressures on space throughout DIT has prompted the Head of Library Services to request a formal review of library space usage in the Institute - with a view to optimising and upgrading the space available. A response to this request is awaiting consideration by the new DIT Executive Resources Committee.

Finally, the Central Services Unit (CSU) occupies a prefab behind the main Conservatory Building on Rathmines Road. This houses the collection management activities of the CSU as well as offices for the Head of Library Services, the two Sub Librarians and the attendant secretarial/administrative support. The accommodation is relatively spacious and it does readily facilitate interaction between the staff there.

3.2 Grangegorman

A large landmark library building has always been central to plans for Grangegorman - bringing together all DIT library activities in a single site for the first time. The concept has evolved through a series of iterations to the current proposal for an integrated 'Academic Hub' in a prominent elevated position on the campus.

With the help of external consultants, the Library Services SMT has refined its requirements from an initial briefing document nearly 10 years ago to a sophisticated accommodation schedule and comprehensive strategic brief today. It is ready to enter into detailed design deliberations as soon as architects are appointed.

Several library staff ‘away days’ have been devoted to Grangegorman, numerous specialist seminars attended and various study visits made to University libraries in Ireland, the UK, Netherlands and Canada.

Extensive desk research has been undertaken as well, in order to inform library staff and others of the current position and likely future developments in the field. This work has been advanced by assigning an Assistant Librarian to work full time on site with the Project Planning Team. Another group continues as a communications channel between interested parties, through a closed blog only, at present. However, it is expected that the work with library staff and other stakeholders will increase substantially as the project progresses.
The latest schedule anticipates a phased move to the new campus, starting in 2014 and ending three years later.

4. Stock

Library Services has more than 350,000 books and other items and provides access to nearly 35,000 journal titles in print and/or electronically. Information is also available in a variety of other physical and electronic formats, stored locally or remotely.

Traditionally, library collections comprised print books and serial publications plus other ‘nonbook’ materials. These were purchased outright, subscribed to on an ongoing basis or received as donations. Nowadays, information is increasingly available electronically - either complementing or replacing print and other resources. Despite some users confusing ‘freely available’ with ‘free of charge’, however, Library Services still has to purchase most of the information to which it provides access.

The final non-pay budget allocation for Library Services for 2009 totalled just under €2,290,000. This represented a reduction of some €142,000 or 5.8% on the allocation for 2008. For many years previously, the budgets had increased by an amount to cover the notional increase in subscription charges for journals and databases.

Even before the reduction, 92% of the non-pay budget was allocated specifically for the provision of information resources, with only 8% for library non-pay operating costs. Subsequent savings were made by further reducing operating costs, by purchasing ‘electronic only’ subscriptions for some journals and by cancelling some subscriptions altogether. Favourable exchange rates helped to ameliorate the situation slightly.

The total book budgets were protected as much as possible, since books are considered to be the library resources most appreciated by students on taught courses - the majority of library users. Even so, the combined book budget allocation of €375,000 was €45,000 or 10.6% lower than that for 2008. Furthermore, book budget allocations have stayed static or decreased since 1999, when they were £350,000 or €444,000.

The Information Resources Group, chaired by a Sub Librarian, is reviewing current policies regarding collection development in the light of changes to both the budgets available and the formats in which information resources are now offered. These deliberations will help steer future decisions in this area.

Library Services already provides access to 35,000 electronic books, on a wide range of subjects. In future, it is intended to increase both the number and variety of e-books and to make them more accessible to users.

After years of lobbying for inclusion in the IReL initiative, DIT and the other IoTs have been granted funding to access two databases, for just one year initially. This provision mark a significant achievement, since it enables library users to access resources not available otherwise.

Arrow@DIT is the institutional repository developed and managed by library staff. It contains more than 1,200 items, including all the Institute’s research theses - making DIT the first institution in the whole island of Ireland to have done so. Moreover, the
Institute’s Research and Scholarship Committee has just adopted a mandate to ensure that all research published by DIT authors is lodged in Arrow.

5. Services

DIT library opening hours had remained unchanged for many years but from December 2008 late nights and Saturdays were extended into the Christmas and Easter holidays, with a commitment to further extensions at other times where sites had “a proven need and adequate staffing”. Unfortunately, the Government’s Recruitment Moratorium followed soon afterwards. The most visible effect of this so far has been a reduction in late night and Saturday opening hours at all the libraries, due to restrictions imposed by the subsequent Employment Control Framework. Library Services is of the view that the provision of other services will inevitably suffer also, although maybe not in such visible ways. Partly in response to such challenges, a self-service circulation machine is to be trialled in 2010 at Aungier Street Library, in order to investigate its potential for improving services to users.

Other sites also provide services that address needs particular to their own clientele e.g. Kevin Street Library has podcast library tours, large plasma TV screens for students to view overseas foreign language broadcasts and laptops for lending. All the libraries have traditionally provided enquiry services and they continue to do so. But they are increasingly offering web-based services as well - both pro actively and on demand e.g. http://www.dit.ie/library/a-z/virtualreferencedesk/, http://www.dit.ie/library/a-z/, http://www.dit.ie/library/askalibrarian/

Other Web 2.0 services have been provided also, with a series of long established blogs http://www.dit.ie/library/a-z/blogs/ plus pilots of Second Life, Facebook, Delicious and Twitter. It is anticipated that such services will increase significantly over time.

Information Literacy (IL) work has greatly increased in recent years. An Assistant Librarian was seconded to a three month project in the Summer of 2007, to review current IL activity at each library and to investigate ways of facilitating future provision. As a result, a generic series of modules was designed to be tailored to specific requirements at individual sites. Take-up by all Faculties has been very encouraging, with library staff now delivering embedded, assessed and credit bearing courses to students at all levels.

Library Services has a particular remit to support research activity and a Sub Librarian has taken responsibility for co-ordinating such activity across the Institute - working closely not only with library colleagues but also with researchers and other research support staff.

Library Services pays the DIT-wide subscription to EndNote and library staff have supported use of the application for some time, with face-to-face training sessions and extensive webpages at http://www.dit.ie/library/endnote/

Also, following the success of Arrow, the manager is increasingly involved in advising academic colleagues on issues relating to publishing, copyright and bibliometrics.

As increasing amounts of information and growing numbers of services are available electronically, the library website becomes even more important. Its content and design are currently being reviewed by the Web Development Group, chaired by a Sub Librarian.
Long term, efforts will be made to further integrate all information and services into a single, user-friendly, intuitive set of pages accessed through the library portal. The overdue upgrade of the Millennium library management system - dependent on the acquisition of a new server - is crucial in this regard.

Communication, promotion and marketing are important activities for any user-centred service at the best of times. In times of rapid change, however, they are essential. Unfortunately, a structured approach to such activities is lacking at the Library Services level, however, they will be accorded a high priority in coming months.

6. Staff

Staffing details for Library Services are detailed in Appendix 12. Apart from the Head of Library Services, there are 2 Sub Librarians (based in Central Services Unit and Systems), 6 Faculty Librarians (one post vacant and is unable to be replaced currently), 14 Assistant Librarians (2 posts vacant, one post on maternity leave), 1 Music Cataloguer, 11 Senior Library Assistants, 22 Library Assistants (1 post vacant), nine part-time Library Assistants (2 posts vacant), two Administrative Assistants.

Due to the Government’s Recruitment Moratorium and Employment Control Framework, library staff numbers have been reduced recently from 79 to 59, a reduction of 25%. In particular, the unfilled posts include 12 ‘sessional’ part-time Library Assistants who were key to maintaining opening hours on late nights and Saturdays. As a result of losing these and other posts, opening hours at all sites have had to be reduced e.g. libraries are now open only 3 or 4 late nights each week instead of 5 and only 3 out of every 4 Saturdays instead of every Saturday. Further ad hoc closures are inevitable whenever staff are off sick or otherwise unexpectedly absent.

Other vacant posts include one Faculty Librarian, three Assistant Librarians and four Library Assistants. Whilst some of their duties can be covered by other staff, other duties are being neglected. And the Mount Street Library was closed this Summer - with its stock and staff moved to Bolton Street - as another direct consequence of the Moratorium.

Flexi time was recently made available to most library staff and has proved successful at all sites. An external consultant also investigated the potential for offering ‘annualised hours’ as a further development that would benefit both the organisation and individual library staff. Further consideration will be given to his findings in the coming months.

In keeping with the rest of DIT, Library Services has a strong team ethos, with the site teams led by members of the Senior Management Team (SMT). The SMT and other teams meet regularly to consider policy issues.

There is also a strong tradition of Staff Training and Development at all grades, in DIT generally and in Library Services in particular. Again, this activity is co-ordinated by a Sub Librarian. PMDS was readily embraced at the outset and a wide variety of training opportunities continue to be undertaken.
One notable initiative this year was an in-house Accredited Professional Development (APD) course on learning, teaching and assessment for library staff which carried 5 ECTS credits. The course was devised jointly by Library Services and colleagues from the Learning, Teaching and Technology Centre to address specific issues relating to the delivery of Information Literacy sessions. A follow-on course will be offered in 2010.

7. **Other stakeholders**

Library staff liaise regularly with a whole variety of DIT stakeholders. Such liaison takes place formally in meetings and other pre-arranged encounters as well as informally face-to-face, on the phone and by email. The DIT Library Committee reports to Academic Council and has a wide membership of staff and students from across the Institute. Library representatives also sit *ex officio* on many other DIT-wide and Faculty/School policy and review committees.

Assistive Technology staff are based in the libraries at Aungier Street and Bolton Street. The Student Maths Learning Centre holds drop-in sessions at those libraries and at Kevin Street. In addition, Aungier Street Library hosts activities run by the National Maintenance Centre and the Institute for Minority Entrepreneurship. The Library Services Homepage has a link to Webcourses, the DIT VLE.

There are close working relationships with colleagues from all Faculties and other support services around a range of projects and common interests e.g. Learning Spaces Group, First Year Experience, Study Skills, Widening Participation, Module Descriptor Catalogue, Research Support, Apprenticeship, Identity Management, Records Management, Open Day …

Externally as well, library staff contribute extensively to wider professional activities e.g. ANLTC: staff training and development; CONUL: copyright, collaborative storage, information literacy, preservation; LIR: HEAnet user group; IReLOpen: open access repository service; COLICO Music PAL: referred user access; Library Association of Ireland: executive board, education committee; SCONUL: executive board.

This term, two high profile events are being organised by DIT library staff for the Irish library and research communities: a LIR workshop on bibliometrics and a seminar on scholarly communication, with the current Chair of IRCSET as keynote speaker.

8. **List of Appendices**

As well as the Library Services Self-Study, the following appendices were provided to Panel members.

A1 Aungier Street
A2 Bolton Street
A3 Cathal Brugha Street
A4 Kevin Street
A5 Mount Street
9. Details of the Review Event including panel membership and the programme for the event

Day 1 – Monday 14 December 2009

Venue: Boardroom, DIT Aungier Street

9.00 am   Tea/Coffee & formal commencement of process: Chair of Panel introduces members of panel to Director of Academic Affairs, Head of Library Services and Library Services Senior Management Team.

9.30 am   Formal presentation by Head of Library Services describing main activities of Library Services and introducing the key points from the self-study report.

10.15 am  Private meeting of Panel to discuss agenda for day.

11.15 am  Tea/Coffee Break.

11.30 am  Panel meets with Library Services Senior Management Team to discuss the broad contents of the self-study exercise and the practical implications arising.
1.00 pm Working lunch & private meeting of panel to review progress and agree issues for further discussion or evaluation.

2.30 pm Panel visits DIT Aungier Street and DIT Kevin Street libraries.

4.00 pm Panel meets with members of the Institute’s Library Committee.

5.00 pm Tea/coffee: Panel meets with representative staff users of Library Services.

5.45 pm Panel meets with representative student users of Library Services.

6.30 pm Private meeting of Panel to review progress.

7.00 pm Dinner (including Director of Academic Affairs, Library Services SMT and Panel).

Day 2 – Tuesday 15 December 2009

Venue: Boardroom (2nd floor), DIT Aungier Street

9.30 am Tea/coffee. Private meeting of Panel to plan for the day.

10.15 am Panel meets with representative group of Library Services staff.

11.15 am Tea/coffee break.

11.30 am Panel meets with CSU and Systems staff.

12.00 noon Private meeting of panel to discuss the draft report.

1.00 pm Lunch for Panel.

2.00 pm Panel meets with Director of Academic Affairs and Head of Library Services to discuss issues of resources, staff development and any outstanding issues.

4.00 pm Final meeting of the panel with Library Services to outline orally the Panel’s findings.

Members of the Review Panel

External Members

Robin Adams Librarian & College Archivist, Trinity College Dublin

Professor John Lancaster Director of Computing and Library Services, University of Huddersfield
10. Summary of the Panel’s Discussions

10.1 Space

The Panel noted the request from the Head of Library Services for a formal review of library space usage in the Institute and it agreed that Library Services should lead any discussions in relation to the optimisation of library space to improve the service for users at a time when resources are scarce. During the tour of the Kevin Street and Aungier Street libraries, the Panel observed the demand for study space and it was very mindful of the importance of the library as provider of a quiet study space for students, especially for those students who are living away from home. The Panel notes that the current ratio of students to seats is higher than the norm and it expresses a hope that study space may be increased or at least that it does not diminish as a result of the space review. The Panel notes and strongly supports the Head of Library Services’ request for a review of library space. It recommends that, as part of this review, individual study space for students should be protected.

The Library Services Senior Management Team has been extensively involved in discussions with external consultants in relation to the plans for the Grangegorman library space. The Panel is most impressed with the plans to date. However, there are obvious concerns about the timing of the Grangegorman project and it is acknowledged that many students will commence and complete their third level education in the DIT before the move to Grangegorman. During the course of the review the poor state of much of the library accommodation was brought to the attention of the Panel. The Panel is particularly concerned about the ongoing water leak in the Bolton Street Library and the impact that this has had and continues to have on the user experience. As well as this issue and the shortage of study space, other problems include poor acoustics in many of the libraries, and poor quality and cramped staff accommodation across the service. In order to protect the quality of the student experience, the Panel recommends that the Institute supports the Library
in ensuring that the quality of the library buildings for both staff and students are maintained according to Health and Safety requirements.

Despite the ongoing problems in relation to space, the Panel is impressed by initiatives undertaken by library staff in collaboration with academic staff and Students’ Union, for example the creation of ‘purple spaces’ which are informal learning spaces across the Institute.

In relation to virtual space, the Panel notes the significant demand on the library’s computer stock. The shortage of computers is a significant issue for students and was raised in the Panel’s meeting with students and emerged in the library user survey. This runs counter to the assumption that students have their own PCs/laptops. There are a number of training rooms within the libraries which had PCs but not all of these rooms are made available to students outside formal sessions. It recommends that where possible there should be a greater use of the space available and that Library Services should open up access to all training rooms, particularly at peak times. The Panel is mindful that the need for training rooms is increasing from a variety of groups across the Institute and it may not be possible to open access to all training rooms. The Panel also recommends, given the high demand for computers within the library, that Library Services should explore opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing with Schools in relation to computer facilities.

Group study rooms are available in Aungier Street and Kevin Street libraries. Students book these rooms in advance and they are well used. Some students have complained, however, that while these rooms may be booked in advance, they often lie unoccupied and other students are unable to access them. The Panel recommends that the Library Services consider how to ensure project rooms are made available when unoccupied, e.g. 5 minute windows after which rooms are released if unoccupied.

10.2 Stock

The range of stock held by Library Services, whether in hard copy or electronically, is stated above in Section 4. The Panel understands that Library Services cater for the needs of staff and students, nevertheless it is surprised by the high number of Journals (35 000) held either electronically or in hard copy, compared to the book stock. While the staff and students the Panel met are appreciative of the access to Journals, students in particular are dissatisfied with the lack of multiple copies of core text books especially at peak times, for example during assessment periods. The annual expenditure ratio of Journals to books appears to be 80:20, the norm in other institutions is nearer to 60:40. The Panel recommends that Library Services introduce a transparent resource allocation formula, which should be needs-based, in relation to Journal and book ordering in order to redress the imbalance here. The Panel also recommends that in relation to stock, a reserve fund should be held to allow the library respond quickly to pressures on the system.

The Panel acknowledges that while students might be expected to buy some key core texts, it does recommend that the loan arrangements for essential and recommended reading as well as loan quotas be considered as part of the work of a user liaison group (see section 10.5 below) to ensure as wide an access as possible to core texts particularly at peak times. It also recommends that the number of core texts/essential readings should be reviewed in relation to student numbers on the relevant programmes.
There was discussion of the benefits of eBooks in terms of flexibility of usage particularly for part-time students and distance learners and the Panel recommends that Library Services consider expanding the range of eBooks available. The Panel recommends the use of enhanced resource discovery tools which would open up the DIT’s collections.

Apart from difficulties obtaining core texts students made a number of suggestions to improve the sustainability of the library stock with which the Panel are in full agreement. This includes that Library Services agree and enforce a policy in relation to the non-return of books/non-payment of fines. It is noted that in other institutions students are unable to graduate until all outstanding fines are paid and books returned. The Panel also recommends, following a suggestion from students, that Library Services collaborate with the Counselling Service in relation to the provision of books on mental health, self-help books and others that might support students during their years in the Institute, in particular the first year. The Panel also notes comments that current book materials did not support international students, many of whom struggled with the English language.

10.3 Services

The six main library sites offer the same services to users across all sites, and is supported by the Central Services Unit in relation to purchasing and acquisitions and cataloguing. The Systems Team which is part of the Central Services Unit maintains the library management system (Millennium) and troubleshoots the library website. The Central Services Unit and the Systems Team are based in Rathmines. The Central Services Unit link with Information Services is very important and while this link works well in relation to Millennium, there is no developmental facility from Information Services to the Library. Any new Library initiative in relation to electronic or other information services provision is currently undertaken by the Library staff. Sometimes this has meant that the Library has had to rely on student work placement in order to complete library information system projects. The Panel is aware of the Institute’s IS process whereby project applications are submitted and prioritised, but it considers that an IS specialist should be designated to work on project development for the Central Services Unit. Nevertheless, the Panel is impressed with how the Central Services Unit and Systems Team, despite not being IT specialists themselves, have engaged with new technologies and continue to explore new opportunities for library users.

The Panel is shocked to hear that the library server is ten years old and that Library Services had first requested a new server in 2005. The Panel is of the view that the ability of Library Services to operate is threatened by the age of the library server and that this must be replaced as a matter of urgency. The Panel points out that servers should, as a rule, be replaced every 3-4 years. The Panel also recommends that the Institute explore with the server provider An Cheim a business continuity plan in the event of the server crashing.

Library opening hours are an issue for student and staff users, and Library Services had recently negotiated longer opening hours (see Section 4 above) but the recruitment moratorium and the loss of those who would be staffing the extended opening hours means that these extended hours have been pulled back and that staff are struggling to maintain existing hours. The Panel congratulates the achievement of the library staff in maintaining existing opening hours in the face of severe staff shortages and it is aware that staff are working to the maximum in order to do this. However, it also acknowledges that there is still a clear demand from
Institute staff and students for as long opening hours as possible. The Panel encourages the library to consider the possibility of creative solutions to this dilemma, while recommending that current opening hours should be maintained. The Panel commends the flexi-time facility and recommends that annualised hours be seriously considered as well as allowing flexibility between one site to another.

There is little use of automated services with the exception of Aungier Street Library where a self-service circulation machine is shortly to be trialled. The Panel believes that Library Services should consider extending automated services where appropriate in order to release staff to participate in other activities. Similarly, it notes that all cataloguing takes place in-house and while it praises the staff who manage to complete a 48-hour turnaround for books, it recommends that Library Services should explore the feasibility of purchasing shelf-ready books, in order to release staff time.

The library website is maintained by the library Systems Unit based in Rathmines. The Panel commends the library website and it encourages and recommends greater use of the Library website as a tool for the education of library users as an alternative to one-to-one sessions with students.

The Panel observes the significant impact that information technology in the library has on the quality of the student experience. The breakdown and unreliability of many of the computers have featured in the user survey and discussions with staff and students. The Library staff as front-line service providers spend much time dealing with complaints about information technology issues despite the fact that they are not accountable nor do they have any responsibility for these services. The Panel recommends that Library Services is supported by a dedicated IS technician to ensure problems are efficiently addressed. It also notes that many of the PCs in the library are over seven years old and therefore unable to support high-end software. It recommends that library PCs are updated every four years, in line with Institute policy in this regard. Other issues relevant to IT within the Library relate to wireless coverage and the Panel recommends that there should be availability of robust wireless coverage across all libraries.

Photocopying and printing facilities are located in the library sites though outsourced to Ricoh. The facilities are well used by students but they often break down, leaving library staff to deal with complaints. The Panel recommends a review of the currently outsourced provision of these facilities to ensure that these services can be properly maintained and that existing contracts are being adhered to. The current situation where library staff spend considerable time supporting these facilities should not continue.

Library Services plays an important role in supporting research activity and works closely with researchers and support staff in this regard. It pays the DIT-wide subscription to EndNote and also provides EndNote training for all staff and students. Positive developments in relation to research include being granted funding to access two databases as part of IReL, the initiative whereby universities are granted full access to all databases. Academic staff have reported that the InterLibrary Loan system, even though the demand for the system has greatly decreased, has been of great value to them in undertaking research.

The Panel highly commends Library Services on the creation of Arrow, the Institutional Repository. This is acknowledged as a remarkable achievement given the limited number of personnel assigned to the task and shows great vision on the part of Library Services. The Panel also sees it as a positive development that the
Institute plans to adopt a mandate to ensure that all research published by Institute authors is lodged in Arrow.

10.4 Staff

The Panel acknowledges the HEA moratorium on staff appointments but is very concerned that with current staffing levels the services that the library aims to provide may not be sustainable and that this would impact on users. The Panel considers that the Institute should seek at the earliest opportunity to appoint library staff and in particular should prioritise the posts of Faculty Librarian in Bolton Street and an Electronic Resources Librarian for the Central Services Unit.

It has already been recognised in this report that staff are overstretched to maintain current services and the Panel has made recommendations as to how various measures might relieve pressure on staff, e.g. the introduction of annualised hours for staff which might allow more flexibility in relation to opening hours and the increased use of automated services as a means of releasing staff for other activities.

The Panel notes and is impressed with the staff development activity of Library staff. It expresses a hope that Library Services would be in a position to continue to support staff development, especially to facilitate the upskilling of staff to help them to cope with the new working situation.

10.5 Satisfaction

As part of the Panel’s visit, it met with a group of staff users, student users and members of the Institute’s Library Committee and during these meetings it is struck by the level of support and goodwill towards Library Services and its staff. Both staff and students are fulsome in their praise for the Library staff across the Institute.

The formal role of the Library Committee is to develop a strategy and advise on the implementation of measures for the development of library services and in general on information storage and retrieval issues throughout the Institute. The Panel met representatives of the Library Committee, many of whom are new members of the Committee and are unsure of their role apart from providing feedback from Schools and Faculties on how the library service is received. The Panel is of the view that the Library Committee should play a significant role as an advocate of Library Services and represent library needs at Academic Council. It recommends that the Library Committee remind itself of its terms of reference and should meet at least twice a semester.

The staff and student users that the Panel met are very complimentary of Library Services in terms of the services provided and the helpfulness of the staff. A number of interesting suggestions emerged, some of which are included in the Panel’s recommendations. There were also useful discussions with both groups as to how Library Services should liaise more effectively with user groups. The Panel recommends that a user working group with particular representation from students be established that would meet regularly to act as a feedback/discussion forum. It also recommends that a member of Library staff should be an ex officio member of Programme Committees to ensure a flow of information between library and academic staff directly in relation to programmes.

Some students reported very positive experiences of a library induction programme, while others visited the library as part of their general induction. The Panel
recommended that introductions to the library should take place not just at the beginning of the academic year, but continue at appropriate times throughout the year, focussing on library literacy, and that Programme Chairs should liaise closely with Library Services in this regard. The Panel commends the initiatives undertaken by both library staff and academics in the Faculty of Tourism and Food and the Faculty of Business in the development of Information Literacy modules. The Get Smart programme running within the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism and the Library resource module running in the Faculty of Business aim to embed learning skills and information literacy within academic programmes. These have been positively received by students and academic staff alike.

Noise levels are an issue in many of the libraries. Library staff admit that much of their time in some libraries is spent asking students to be quiet. The Panel itself observed this situation during the tour of the libraries. It considers that there is a need for a culture of quiet within the libraries that is currently lacking. A number of factors were discussed in relation to possible reduction of noise levels. These include: the design and nature of the learning space including specially zoned areas (silent, quiet, discussion), layout of desks and staff desk space, the entrance to the libraries and lighting within the libraries. It recommends that Library Services bear in mind these factors, that it work with users to change the culture within the libraries, and discuss with the Students’ Union the role it has to play.

The Panel considers it important to recognise and to maintain the diversity of the DIT student body. It expresses concern about the impact that the withdrawal of extended opening hours is having on part-time students. Staff highlight that many of these students travel some distance for evening classes and are unable to access the library during the day. The Panel recommends that the Institute should address this situation and provide an adequate library service for all students.

A number of other issues are identified that impact on user satisfaction and the Panel brings these to the attention of Library Services:
- reported difficulties in topping up card for printing. The Panel recommends that alternative ways of topping up, whether by phone, email, should be explored;
- the Institute should schedule building works in libraries outside the semester to minimise disruption to users;
- Library Services might consider greater use of podcasts;
- Library Services might have a presence on the main DIT homepage as a very visible link to the Library.

11. Conclusions of the Review Panel

11.1 Areas for commendation

The Panel is very pleased to acknowledge the high praise it had heard for Library Services from its meetings with Institute staff and students during the review. Library staff are commended for their ‘can do’ attitude, their proactive approach and their goodwill. Staff are described, variously, as professional, flexible, committed, enthusiastic, adaptable and approachable. The Panel considers that the attitude and ethos described above reflected an ideal template for how a central service should operate.
The Panel identifies the following specific **areas for commendation:**

- the innovative culture whereby individual staff are able to undertake specific initiatives
- the achievement of the Institutional Repository, Arrow
- the idea of the library as a learning *cultural* space which contributes to the quality of the student experience
- positive collaboration between library staff and other areas of the Institute, for example the ‘purple spaces’, a variety of informal learning spaces across the Institute
- the development of the Information Literacy programmes including the Get Smart programme. Library inductions, where they take place, are also commended
- excellent take-up of staff development opportunities. The Panel hopes that this can be maintained
- willingness of library staff to explore innovative means of communication (Twitter, Facebook etc)
- the 48-hour turnaround in the Central Services Unit for the cataloguing of books
- excellent plans for the new Grangegorman campus
- establishment of the Information Resources Group, as a proactive response to the changing economic climate.
- the positive impact of facilitating the supply of surplus books to developing countries
- the reflective yet succinct nature of the self-study report prepared by Library Services.

### 5.2 Recommendations for further consideration

The Panel makes the following recommendations to Library Services and to the Institute.

**Space**

i) The Panel notes and strongly supports the Head of Library Services’ request for a review of library space. The Panel is also very mindful of the role of the library as provider of a quiet study space for students. It recommends that, as part of this review, the protection of study space for students should be a priority. The Panel notes that the current ratio of eight students to one seat is
higher than the norm and it expresses a hope that study space may be increased or at least that it does not diminish as a result of the space review.

ii) In relation to virtual space, the Panel noted the significant demand on Library Services’s computer stock. It recommends that there should be a greater use of the space available and that Library Services should open up access to all training rooms where possible, particularly at peak times.

iii) The Panel recommends the use of enhanced resource discovery tools which would extend DIT’s collections.

iv) The Panel commends the plans for the Grangegorman library space. However, there are obvious concerns about the timing of the Grangegorman project and that many students will complete their third level education in the DIT before the move to Grangegorman. In order to protect the quality of the student experience, the Panel recommends that the Institute supports Library Services in ensuring the quality of the library buildings and stock. The Panel notes several issues in this regard, including poor staff accommodation, poor acoustics, water leaks in the Bolton Street library roof.

Stock

v) The Panel is surprised by the high number of Journals held either electronically or in hard copy, compared to the book stock. The annual expenditure ratio of Journals to books appears to be 80:20, the norm being nearer to 60:40. It recommends that Library Services introduce a transparent resource allocation formula, which should be needs-based, in relation to Journal and book ordering in order to redress the imbalance here. The Panel also recommends that in relation to stock, a reserve fund should be held to allow the library respond quickly to pressures on the system.

vi) The Panel notes the benefits of eBooks in terms of flexibility of usage and it recommends that Library Services consider expanding the range of eBooks available.

vii) The Panel heard from students concerns in relation to the availability of core texts in particular at peak assessment times. The Panel recommends that the loan arrangements for essential and recommended reading as well as loan quotas be considered and reviewed as part of the work of a user liaison group and that the number of core texts/essential reading should be reviewed in relation to student numbers on the relevant programmes.

viii) The Panel recommends that Library Services agree and enforce a policy in relation to the non-return of books/non-payment of fines. It is noted that in other institutions students are unable to graduate until all outstanding fines are paid and books returned.

ix) The Panel recommends that Library Services collaborate with the Counselling Service in relation to the provision of books on mental health, self-help books and others that might support students during their years in the Institute especially the first year.
Services

x) The Panel is of the view that the ability of library services to operate is threatened by the age (10 years) of the library server and that this must be replaced by the Institute as a matter of urgency. It notes that a request to this effect was first made in 2005 and that servers should be replaced after 4 years. The Panel also recommends that the Institute explore with An Cheim a business continuity plan in the event of the server crashing.

xi) The Panel congratulates the achievement of the library staff in maintaining existing opening hours when 25% of staff was lost. It also notes that there is a clear demand from Institute staff and students for as long opening hours as possible. The Panel encourages Library Services to consider the possibility of creative solutions to this dilemma, while recommending that current opening hours should be maintained as the minimum. The Panel commends the flexi-time facility and recommends that annualised hours be seriously considered as well as allowing flexibility between one site to another.

xii) The Panel recommends that Library Services should consider increased use of self-service options/automated services as a means of reducing pressure on staff.

xiii) The Panel commends the library website and it encourages greater use of the Library website as a tool for the education of library users as an alternative to one-to-one sessions with students.

xiv) The Panel notes that many of the PCs in the library are over seven years old and therefore unable to support high-end software. It recommends that library PCs are updated every four years, in line with Institute policy in this regard.

xv) The Panel observes the impact that information technology in the library has on the quality of the student experience. It recommends that Library Services is supported by a dedicated IS technician to ensure problems are efficiently addressed.

xvi) The Panel recommends a review of the currently outsourced provision of photocopying and printing facilities to ensure that these services can be properly maintained. The current situation where library staff spend considerable time supporting these facilities should not continue.

xvii) The Panel recommends an IS specialist to work on project development for the Central Services Unit.

xviii) The Panel recommends a number of improvements in relation to the provision of IT in the library, including the availability of robust wireless coverage across all libraries.

xix) The Panel recommends that each Programme Committee should include library representation, in order to strengthen the link between academic staff, programmes of study and the library.
Staff

xx) The Panel acknowledges the HEA moratorium on staff appointments but is concerned that with current staffing levels the services that the library aims to provide are not sustainable and that this is impacting on the student experience. The Panel considers that the Institute should seek to appoint staff in the library and should prioritise the posts of Faculty Librarian in Bolton Street and an Electronic Resources Librarian.

xxi) The Panel notes and is impressed with the staff development activity that staff have engaged in and it recommends that staff development continues to be supported to allow the upskilling of staff to cope with new systems.

Satisfaction

xxii) The Panel is of the view that the Library Committee should play a significant role as an advocate of the library and represent library needs at Academic Council. It recommends that the Library Committee remind itself of its terms of reference and should meet at least twice a semester.

xxiii) The Panel recommends that a user working group with particular representation from students be established that would meet regularly to act as a feedback/discussion forum.

xxiv) It is noted that some students have very positive experiences of a library induction programme, while others had very little library induction. The Panel recommends that introductions to the library should take place not just at the beginning of the academic year, but continue at appropriate times throughout the year, focussing on library literacy, and that Programme Chairs should liaise closely with Library Services in this regard.

xxv) The Panel considers that there is a need for a culture of quiet within the libraries that is currently lacking. It highlights a number of factors that should be taken into account in relation to reduction of noise levels. These include design of the library space including specially zoned areas (silent, quiet, discussion), layout of desks and staff desk space. It recommends that Library Services bear in mind these and other factors, work with users including the Students Union to change the culture within the libraries.

xxvi) The Panel notes the high level of demand for computers in the library. It recommends that Library Services should explore opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing with Schools in relation to computer facilities.

xxvii) The Panel considers it important to recognise and to maintain the diversity of the DIT student body. It expresses concern that the current situation, in particular the withdrawal of extended opening hours, is having the greatest impact on part-time students who are unable to access services during the day. It recommends that the Institute should address this situation and provide an adequate library service for all students.

xxviii) A number of other issues are identified that impacted on user satisfaction and the Panel brings these to the attention of Library Services and the Institute:
difficulties in topping up card for printing. The Panel recommends that
alternative ways of topping up, whether by phone, email, should be explored;
the Institute should schedule building works in libraries outside the semester, to
minimise disruption to users;
Library Services might consider greater use of podcasts;
Library Services might have a presence on the main DIT homepage as a very
visible link to the Library.

The Panel thanked the staff of Library Services for the courtesy and openness which
the Panel was afforded during its visit.