

GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY 2020 LIBRARY REVIEW: REPORT TO FELLOWS – CONCISE VERSION

This concise report presents a summary of the findings of the Geological Society's 2020 Library review. The full version of this report is available on the Geological Society website.

Background

1. The previous Library Review was undertaken in 2010 and made a series of recommendations covering Library management, collections and services. Most of the actions arising from that review have been subsequently carried out.
2. Much has changed in the intervening years and the external environment is more challenging for the Society. Open access publishing, the decline in membership numbers, the increased difficulty of raising corporate sponsorship and the current uncertainties surrounding the Burlington House lease all present challenges. In the context of these challenges, Council commissioned the present Library Review at the end of 2019.
3. A Library Review Working Group was assembled and approved by Council and comprised eight members drawn from both within and outside the Geological Society. Members were chosen from learned society, university and commercial backgrounds and selected for their experience and expertise in library use, management and development, publishing, the geosciences and finance. The Group worked throughout 2020 examining existing evidence, interviewing expert witnesses and conducting a Fellowship survey.
4. Council was kept informed of progress during the review process and approved the final report and recommendations at its meeting on 25 November 2020. Approval was given in the context of a wide range of considerations including the financial position, Burlington House lease options, the Society's strategic plan and an ongoing review of membership categories and benefits.
5. The detailed findings of the Review are presented in section 3 of this report and cover Library finances, visitors and service users, collections usage, heritage material, modern records, maps, physical Library space, information systems and technology, and Library systems, processes and management. The range of review findings reflect the Library Review Working Group's focus on those activities most closely aligning with the Library's core purpose, incurring greatest cost, receiving the most use or having the greatest impact on the Society, including Burlington House occupancy.
6. The report does not provide a blueprint for action; rather, it presents a wide range of recommendations which will require further work to create a detailed implementation plan.

Key recommendations

7. Recommendations fall into four key areas: Library purpose, priorities and expertise; reduction in Library cost; focus on online services offerings and capability; and process change.
8. *Library purpose, priorities and expertise*
 - a. The purpose of the Library should be redefined to put increased emphasis on the provision of cost effective online access to resources; emphasise the importance of maps, heritage collections and science of exceptional importance; promote online scientific and educational outreach; and develop an effective digital archive of records pertaining to the Society's historical, current and business activities. See page 5 for the detailed definition

- b. As a priority, Library print collections should be allocated to a range of tiers according to priority for retention (including a core tier for retention in all eventualities). If staying in Burlington House, this tiering can be used to enable a reduction in storage and space occupancy; if moving from Burlington House it can be used in planning space requirements. As a rule, non-core tier book and journal titles should be disposed of rather than stored offsite, although the partial conversion of the Publishing House warehouse to 'near-line' Library storage space would maximise access to valued print material not currently available in digital format
 - c. If the Society remains in Burlington House the atmosphere and prestige of the Main Library should be maintained, but the space should be made available for a much wider range of uses including external hire
 - d. Staff expertise should be recognised as central to the functioning of the Library, with development and training being provided as required.
9. *Reduction in Library cost*
- a. While the Library offers impressive collections and services to users the cost is high (in excess of £500,000 in 2019) the proportion of both Fellows using the Library, and of Library content actively consulted, is small. In the context of Society-wide budgetary constraints (which are necessary to ensure continuity of the breadth of Society services and charitable activities) an immediate recommendation is to reduce costs by reducing subscriptions and focusing acquisitions spend on the most-used titles
 - b. Restructuring of staffing at the Society has already resulted in additional savings in Library staff costs.
10. *Focus on online service offerings and capability*
- a. There should be an immediate shift away from the acquisition of print serials in favour of online-only subscriptions and, wherever possible, archives. Print copies of titles held digitally should be disposed of
 - b. Efforts should be made to extend Fellows' free access to the Society's own publications on the Lyell Collection, while modest charges should be introduced for Fellows' use of other publishers' journals accessed via the Library's OpenAthens system. The aim should be to offer Fellows increased access to a seamless package of online resources via the Society, be they Society-published or externally sourced
 - c. Investment should be made in the Society's information systems to remove the technical impediments that Fellows and staff experience in seeking to access online resources, including single sign-on to the Society's website, OpenAthens and the Lyell Collection
 - d. A digital preservation policy should be developed with a view to capturing priority heritage material, maximising revenues from rights sales, increasing the exposure of historical materials for the public good, ensuring the effective capture of Society business records and ensuring compliance with data protection legislation.

11. *Process change*

- a. Library procedures should be reviewed in order to increase efficiency, minimise manual intervention and make data central to decision making. Via induction and e-training Library users should also be encouraged to exercise greater independence in their use of Library and other information resources.

Implementation

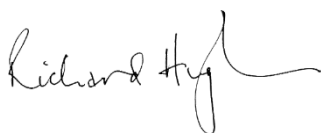
12. Although some elements of the recommendations have already been carried out as a matter of urgency (particularly those where action is needed as part of the budget cycle) the main recommendations of the Review will require further work to create a detailed implementation plan. The Head of Library and Information Services post is currently vacant and work will commence on a comprehensive action plan and timeline for implementation once the post has been filled.



Hazel Rymer, Chair of the Library Review Working Group



Rob Strachan, Council member (Secretary, Publications)



Richard Hughes, Executive Secretary

11 March 2021

EXPLANATION OF SLIDES

- **SLIDE 1: DRIVERS FOR CHANGE**

Slide 1 summarises five key drivers for change.

- **SLIDE 2: SIMPLIFIED SCHEMATIC VIEW OF LIBRARY COLLECTION OPTIONS**

Slide 2 provides a schematic illustration of Library collection options. Five models are shown, with a potential range of holdings identified for each. The vertical axis shows a range of costs, scope and space requirements; the horizontal axis illustrates a range of holdings from high value heritage materials (mostly in print) to current subscriptions and GSL-published titles (held digitally). The recommendations of this report are based on model 2.

- **SLIDE 3: SIMPLIFIED SCHEMATIC VIEW OF LIBRARY LOCATION OPTIONS**

Slides 3 provides a schematic illustration of Library location options and the potential impact on collections and services, dependent on the outcome of the Society's current lease negotiations. The horizontal axis shows a range of larger and smaller metropolitan to non-metropolitan, with Burlington House positioned on the left. The vertical axis sets out the range of collections and services offered and location options for off-site material.

- **SLIDE 4: PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

Slide 4 sets out four priority areas for action and sets, and the key contingencies which will need to be taken into account in the implementation phase of the project.

Slide 1: Drivers for change



COST

£543k in 2019 – 36% real terms increase since 2005
62% staff, 31% collections, 7% other



VISITORS and COLLECTION USAGE

Physical Library used by 5% of Fellows, and falling; 8-10% use any service at all
Frequent user levels far lower than this
Of c600 serials titles: 50% not used in 2019, 5% account for 80% of usage



DIGITAL DELIVERY OPPORTUNITIES

Delivery of information resources directly to user desktops
Enhanced value to international Fellows
Closer alignment to new strategic objectives



RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND DIGITISATION

Required systems for records management not in place
High value archive material requires systematic digital capture and preservation



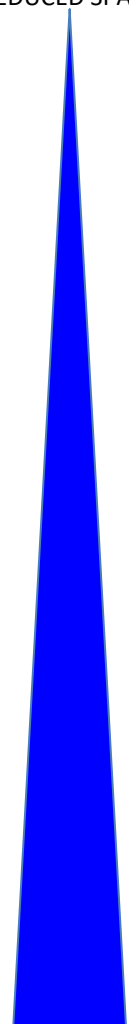
SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Information systems and technology frustrate users and staff alike
Library management and data systems dated, sub-optimal and time intensive

SLIDE 2: SIMPLIFIED SCHEMATIC VIEW OF LIBRARY COLLECTION

OPTIONS

LOW COST
NARROW SCOPE
REDUCED SPACE



HIGH COST
BROAD SCOPE
MAX SPACE

Model 1: Heritage collection plus Society's science output only – the Royal Society of Chemistry model

<p>HIGH VALUE/HERITAGE SCIENCE Unique, rare, historical, low availability, poor accessibility, map collection</p>	<p>'Very best of the Geological Society only' No dated/routine science held No costly subscription journals Lyell Collection provides modern science, journal/library savings fund full Lyell provision</p>	<p>GSL BOOKS + JOURNALS no extra F'ship fee</p>
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Model 2: Heritage/map collection plus Society's digital science output and optional third-party science

<p>TIER 1 → TIER X HIGH VALUE/HERITAGE SCIENCE Unique, rare, historical, low availability, poor accessibility, map collection → GENERAL GEOSCIENCE PRE-2000 Most valued paper</p>	<p>'Best of the Geol Soc + optional third-party current science' No general geoscience held where freely/digitally available GS journals gratis + optional 3rd party science for small fee.</p>	<p>c. 30 SUBSCRIPTION JOURNALS extra F'ship fee</p>	<p>GSL JOURNALS no extra F'ship fee</p>
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Model 3: Heritage/map collection plus reduced current digital science from Society and third-parties

<p>TIER 1 → TIER Y HIGH VALUE/HERITAGE SCIENCE Unique, rare, historical, low availability, poor accessibility, map collection → GENERAL GEOSCIENCE PRE-2000 More commonly available, special interest, paper only</p>	<p>'Reduced current library with digital-only current journals' No general geoscience held where freely available or digitally available. Reduced journal coverage, digital only.</p>	<p>c. 50 SUBSCRIPTION JOURNALS ?extra F'ship fee</p>	<p>GSL JOURNALS ? extra F'ship fee</p>
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Model 4: Heritage/map and reduced dated science collection plus broad current science

<p>HIGH VALUE/HERITAGE SCIENCE Unique, rare, historical, low availability, poor accessibility, map collection</p>	<p>GENERAL GEOSCIENCE PRE-2000 More commonly available, special interest, paper only</p>	<p>'Trimmed current library' No general geoscience held where freely available or digitally available Lyell and journals as below.</p>	<p><600 SUBSCRIPTION JOURNALS inc. in F'ship fee</p>	<p>GSL LYELL COLLECTION extra F'ship fee</p>
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Model 5: Current model – broad library with Society journals/books mostly on fee basis

<p>HIGH VALUE/HERITAGE SCIENCE Unique, rare, historical, low availability, poor accessibility, map collection</p>	<p>GENERAL GEOSCIENCE PRE-2000 More commonly available, special interest, paper only</p>	<p>GENERAL GEOSCIENCE PRE-2000 Digitally available material also held in paper format</p>	<p><600 SUBSCRIPTION JOURNALS inc. in F'ship fee</p>	<p>GSL LYELL COLLECTION extra F'ship fee</p>
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SLIDE 3: SIMPLIFIED SCHEMATIC VIEW OF LIBRARY LOCATION

OPTIONS

MAXIMUM SPACE AND ACCESSIBILITY

DEPENDENT ON FINAL GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY LOCATION

REDUCED SPACE AND ACCESSIBILITY



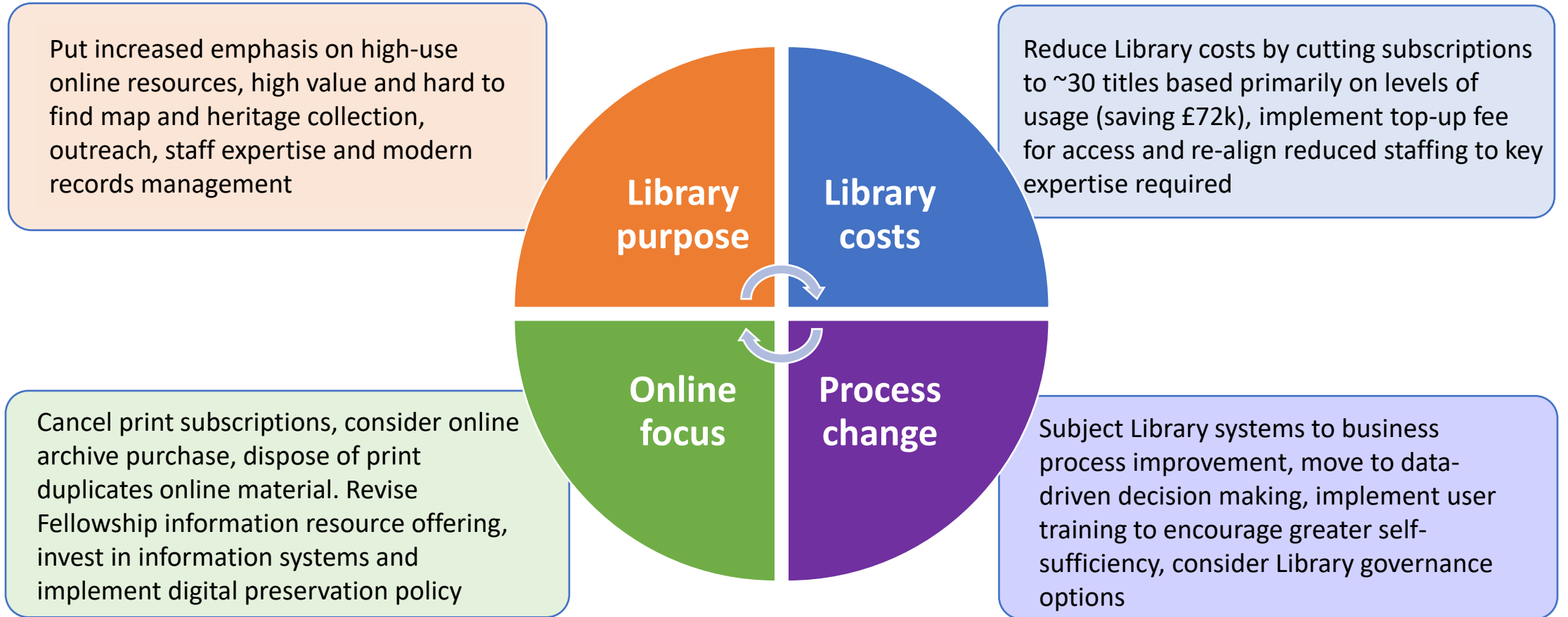
LOCATION ASSUMPTION	Burlington House	Metropolitan location with office, study and collection space	Non-metropolitan location with office and some collection space	Non-metropolitan location with office space only
SPACE ASSUMPTION	As currently configured but with reduced storage space	Reduced library space: on-site service and Fellows visits but reduced work space	Much reduced library space: remote service delivery with visitors by appointment (eg maps)	Very limited library space: remote service delivery only
ON-SITE COLLECTION				
Journals	ONSITE	REDUCED	MUCH REDUCED	NONE
Books	ONSITE	REDUCED (GSL ONLY?)	NONE	NONE
Heritage collection	ONSITE	ONSITE	REDUCED	MUCH REDUCED
Map collection	ONSITE	REDUCED	REDUCED	NONE (OFFSITE)
SERVICES (ABBREVIATED SERVICE LISTING SHOWN HERE)				
Enquiries and assistance	ONSITE AND REMOTE	ONSITE AND REMOTE	BY APPOINTMENT AND REMOTE	REMOTE ONLY
Loans and retrievals from store	ONSITE AND REMOTE	ONSITE AND REMOTE	REMOTE ONLY	LIMITED, REMOTE
New acquisitions	DIGITAL+PRINT BOOKS	DIGITAL+PRINT BOOKS	DIGITAL ONLY?	DIGITAL ONLY
Events and exhibitions	PHYSICAL AND ONLINE	MAINLY ONLINE	ONLINE ONLY	ONLINE ONLY
Bookshop	PHYSICAL + ONLINE	PHYSICAL + ONLINE	ONLINE ONLY	ONLINE ONLY
Administrative functions	ONSITE	ONSITE REDUCED	ONSITE REDUCED	ONSITE MUCH REDUCED
Conservation and digitisation	ONSITE	REDUCED, ONSITE	REDUCED ONSITE	MUCH REDUCED
Catalogues	ONLINE	ONLINE	ONLINE	ONLINE
OFF-SITE STORED MATERIAL (OFFSITE EG DEEPSTORE, NEAR LINE EG BATH) - SUBJECT TO TIER DEFINITIONS				
Low tier - Journals available online	ONSITE	DISPOSE	DISPOSE	DISPOSE
Mid tier – e.g. lesser-used non online journals	ONSITE	BATH WAREHOUSE + DISPOSE	DISPOSE	DISPOSE
High tier – e.g. some closed journals and books considered valuable to retain	ONSITE	ONSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE	BATH WAREHOUSE	BATH WAREHOUSE + DISPOSE
Core tier	ONSITE	ONSITE	ONSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE	BATH WAREHOUSE + OFFSITE
Heritage collection	ONSITE + OFFSITE	ONSITE + OFFSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE	ONSITE + OFFSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE	OFFSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE
Map collection	ONSITE	ONSITE	ONSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE	OFFSITE + BATH WAREHOUSE

RANGE OF OPTIONS COMPATIBLE WITH PROPOSED MODEL

PROPOSED MODEL COMPROMISED



Slide 4: Priorities for action



Key contingencies noted:

Fellowship Categories and Benefits review

Strategic Options review

Review of Society accommodation

2020 staffing levels reductions