

**Managing Universities and Colleges:**  
**Guides to good practice**

**m a n a g i n g**

# **Information**

Edited by  
**Judith Elkin and Derek Law**

# **MANAGING INFORMATION**



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## SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Post-secondary educational institutions can be viewed from a variety of different perspectives. For the majority of students and staff who work in them, they are centres of learning and teaching where the participants are there by choice and consequently, by and large, work very hard. Research has always been important in some higher education institutions, but in recent years this emphasis has grown and what for many was a great pleasure and, indeed, a treat, is becoming more of a threat and an insatiable performance indicator which just has to be met. Maintaining the correct balance between quality research and learning/teaching, while the unit of resource continues to decline inexorably, is one of the key issues facing us all. Educational institutions as workplaces must be positive and not negative environments.

From another aspect, post-secondary educational institutions are clearly communities, functioning to all intents and purposes like small towns and internally requiring and providing a similar range of services, while also having very specialist needs. From yet another, they are seen as external suppliers of services to industry, commerce and the professions. These 'customers' receive, *inter alia*, a continuing flow of well-qualified fresh graduates with transferable skills, part-time and short course study opportunities through which to develop existing employees, consultancy services to solve problems and help expand business, and research and development support to create new breakthroughs.

However, educational institutions are also significant businesses in their own right. One recent study of the economic impact of higher education in Wales shows that it is of similar importance in employment terms to the steel or banking/finance sectors. Put

another way, Welsh higher education institutions (HEIs) spend half a billion pounds annually and create more than 23,000 full-time equivalent jobs. And it must be remembered that there are only 13 HEIs in Wales, compared with 171 in the whole of the UK, and that these Welsh institutions are, on average, relatively small. In addition, it has recently been realized that UK higher education is a major export industry with the added benefit of long-term financial and political returns. If the UK further education sector is added to this equation, then the economic impact of post-secondary education is of truly startling proportions.

Whatever perspective you take, it is obvious that educational institutions require managing and, consequently, this series has been produced to facilitate that end. The editors have striven to identify authors who are distinguished practitioners in their own right and can also write. The authors have been given the challenge of producing essentially practical handbooks which combine appropriate theory and contextual material with many examples of good practice and guidance.

The topics chosen are of key importance to educational management and stand at the forefront of current debate. Some of these topics have never been covered in depth before and all of them are equally applicable to further as well as higher education. The editors are firmly of the belief that the UK distinction between these sectors will continue to blur and will be replaced, as in many other countries, by a continuum where the management issues are entirely common.

Since the mid-1980s, both of the editors have been involved with a management development programme for senior staff from HEIs throughout the world. Every year the participants quickly learn that we share the same problems and that similar solutions are normally applicable. Political and cultural differences may on occasion be important, but are often no more than an overlying veneer. Hence, this series will be of considerable relevance and value to post-secondary educational managers in many countries.

The members of post-secondary educational institutions are almost entirely dependent upon information – information which flows within the institution, between institutions and increasingly on a global scale. We are all affected. No one can escape this information tidal wave and probably no one would want to do so. The primary brief for this volume, therefore, was to produce a book on the management of information for non-information specialists, a book which we could all turn to whatever our jobs or disciplines, a book in which we could all find something of value and assistance. The editors have achieved this task superbly.

Judith Elkin and Derek Law have assembled a team of experts who have worked systematically from the broad horizons of the international context, via the UK national scene to the situation in educational institutions. Having reached this level, they deal with a variety of key topics of immense practical importance such as developing an information strategy, managing information in research, applying technology to learning and the knotty problem of intellectual property rights. Then the volume concludes with a look into the future – a future which will almost certainly be with us far more quickly than we currently think.

David Warner  
David Palfreyman

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# PREFACE

Information is the key to the modern age. The new age of information offers possibilities for the future limited only by the boundaries of our imaginations. The potential of the new electronic networks is breathtaking – the prospect of change as widespread and fundamental as the agricultural and industrial revolutions of earlier eras.

(UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair in *Our Information Age*)

Information underpins all the activities of further and higher education: teaching, research, administration, business development and strategic planning. Colleges and universities need more than ever before to ensure that information is managed effectively and efficiently. Since the new Labour government came into power in the UK in May 1997, considerable attention has been paid to the concept of the information society and education and lifelong learning. Two key documents underpin government policies: *Our Information Age: The Government's Vision* and *The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a New Britain*. They set out the government's intention to enable people to take advantage of the new information age concentrating on five key areas: transforming education, widening access, promoting competition and competitiveness, fostering equality and modernizing government. Their vision is explored more fully in Chapter 2.

The emerging information and communication technologies frame the new literacy, and the successful communities of tomorrow will be those who, given access, are informed and educated in the use of these technologies. There will be a need to help people at risk because they lack the skills and to provide them with the tools to deal with information. Information literacy will be at the heart of the educational system as a whole and be seen as an investment in people.

Further and higher education will play an increasingly strong and fundamental role in the economic and cultural life of the regions and the nation and the way that both sectors are managed and how they collaborate within the wider community will be central to the



well-being of all. The effective and efficient management of information will be crucial for these institutions to survive and grow. This book looks at the management of information in administration, research, teaching and learning and discusses issues surrounding information strategies, intellectual property and the concept of hybrid and electronic libraries to underpin teaching, learning and research. The messages in all chapters are equally applicable across the whole of the further and higher education sector.

The book begins with Nick Moore's comparative study of national information policies from an international perspective, contrasting the various stages of development of such policies within the European Union (EU) and looking at developments in other parts of the world, particularly demonstrating the lead taken by Singapore. In Chapter 2 Judith Elkin sets the national scene in the UK, exploring some of the current government reports and initiatives quoted at the beginning of this preface and exploring the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in our future society. In Chapter 3 she highlights the need for all organizations and institutions to manage information efficiently and effectively, looking at knowledge management concepts and analysing recent further and higher education reports and initiatives which underpin teaching, learning and research. In Chapter 4 Ann Hughes explores the need for information strategies from her position as Information Strategies Coordinator for the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). She gives a brief history of information strategies and a summary of the first phase of the JISC Information Strategies Initiative, including the pilot sites and what was learnt from them. The extension of the project to nine 'exemplar sites' and the possible future developments are outlined.

In Chapter 5 John O'Donovan highlights the importance of collecting, organizing, analysing and disseminating information as essential for good management and decision making and provides a framework of ideas, concepts, views, practical tips and advice that can be brought to bear on the day-to-day activities of administrators. In Chapter 6 David Squires concentrates on information in research, looking at the rationale for using ICT\* in research, in terms of information access, new publication mechanisms, an improved democratic research culture and efficiency and effectiveness. He bases his comments on a research study carried out at King's College

\* ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) and CIT or C&IT (Communications and Information Technology) are interchangeable terms used by different educational sectors and government departments. No attempt has been made to harmonize them and the contributors have used the acronym with which they are familiar.

London. In Chapter 7 Alan Staley looks at information in support of learning, using Kolb's Learning Cycle as a framework. He makes links between academia and the workplace and between theory and practice in the use of appropriate technology in supporting the student. In Chapter 8 Derek Law challenges universities and colleges to take intellectual property rights more seriously and to consider the implications of this 'complex and dangerous' area of activity, particularly when compounded within an electronic environment. In Chapter 9 William Foster surveys issues surrounding the development of the electronic and hybrid library and assesses the impact that changes from a print to a networked electronic environment will have on teaching, learning and research and the implications for the future role of librarians.

It is perhaps important to stress that the book offers no 'right' answers. Some chapters give overviews, others explain particular research or policy, some offer advice and guidance. All are intended to provoke thought as to how universities and colleges operate. Collectively they stress the need for information strategies. Just as important is the need to integrate such strategies with other institutional strategies. All too often this is not done, sometimes with faintly comical results. For example, in the UK it is increasingly common to have an information technology (IT) strategy which involves wiring up halls of residence to give students access to the campus network. At the same time it is equally common to have a student pastoral policy which guarantees a place in halls of residence to first year students. Taken together – or more accurately because they are not taken together – the consequence is that those least able to use the network are given access to it and as soon as they have the skills to use it, the access is removed as they move out into houses and flats. In the same way the Estates Strategy rarely considers the implications of new teaching technologies for the future of large lecture spaces.

Inevitably a work such as this also excludes some areas. The very pervasiveness of information makes it almost impossible to draw sensible boundaries around the subject. No mention is made of the recreational use of information and whether this is a legitimate use of institutional resource. More could be made of the need for continuous staff training and development at all levels as technology spreads. Nothing is said of the growing market for smart cards and of the information component which they may include.

Further and higher education exist in a rapidly changing environment. It is impossible to reflect an up to the moment view of some changes. For up to date information on projects the authors recommend visiting the Web sites cited.

In short, this book is meant to open up the topic of information management and to encourage reflection on one's own institution and how it is dealing with the lifeblood of its activity.

Judith Elkin  
Derek Law

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Judith Elkin** is the Dean of the Faculty of Computing, Information and English, University of Central England in Birmingham. Her particular interest is in raising the profile of information professionals, by attracting high-quality students to undergraduate and Masters courses, offering better opportunities for continuing professional development and creating a sound research base. At UCE, she heads a team of academics and researchers concerned with communication in the widest sense, highlighting the importance of access to information and information handling in the world today. Judith is a member of the Library and Information Commission and its Research Committee. She was a member of the Higher Education Funding Councils' (HEFC) Research Assessment panel for Library and Information Management in 1992 and 1996 and will chair the 2001 panel.

**William Foster** is a head of teaching, learning and quality for the School of Information Studies at the University of Central England in Birmingham and Course Director of the MA/MSc Information and Library Studies (part-time). He was Academic Adviser to TAP in 1995–8, one of the eLib projects on training and awareness in networks, and has just finished coediting a book on academic culture change in networked libraries. He has worked in academic, public and special libraries and has previous experience of implementing library management systems and Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) design. He currently teaches in the areas of information retrieval, technical services and electronic library developments.

**Ann Hughes** is the JISC Information Strategies Coordinator and produced the *Guidelines for Developing an Information Strategy – The*

*Sequel.* Based at the University of Nottingham, she works with a wide range of higher education institutions to develop their information strategies. As part of the JISC Information Strategies Initiative she runs workshops and conferences, contributes to journals and has presented papers at conferences both in the UK and abroad. A graduate of the Open University, her career has developed through a variety of senior administrative and managerial posts in both higher and further education.

**Derek Law** is Director of Information Strategy at the University of Strathclyde. For most of the 1990s he was a member of the JISC and its predecessors, where he became closely associated with the development of nationally networked information and the various issues surrounding that subject. He was a founder member of the Association for Learning and Teaching and chaired the 1992 and 1996 Research Assessment Exercise panels in Library and Information Management. A visiting professor both at Sheffield University and the University of Central England in Birmingham, he is a regular author and lecturer on topics related to information management and the information society. He is at present a member of the Library and Information Commission and is treasurer of the International Federation of Library Associations.

**Nick Moore** is Professor of Information Policy at City University in London. He spent eight years with the Policy Studies Institute developing a programme of research into the policy issues raised by the development of information societies. He also spent two years with the British Council studying the development of information societies in East Asia. He is the managing partner in Acumen, a research consultancy specializing in information policy issues.

**John O'Donovan** began his career in university administration in 1981, after postgraduate and postdoctoral research at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. For most of his career he has been involved in providing administrative support to the planning, policy and resourcing functions. He has always had a great interest in management information and its role in supporting the decision-making processes in universities. John is currently Academic Secretary at the University of Sheffield, which means that he is responsible for the leadership of a large administrative department in one of the UK's top research-led universities.

**David Squires** is a reader in Educational Computing, School of Education, King's College London. He has been involved since 1979 in the design and evaluation of software for use in educational settings. His current research is focused on theories of learning and the design

and evaluation of educational software, the teacher as a virtual presence in networked environments, and the use of ICT in academic research. Research in the latter area has been supported by King's College (1992–3) and the British Library Research and Innovation Centre (1993–6).

**Alan Staley** is Head of Research in the Learning Methods Unit at the University of Central England in Birmingham. His major research interest is the appropriate use of learning technology within higher education to improve the quality of student learning. He is currently the project manager of a four-year Computer Supported Experiential Learning project which aims to identify best practice for the use of a number of technologies alongside traditional classroom-based teaching methods.

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