



# Internal Quality Review

## Library 2020

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

## Peer Review Group Report

### RCSI Library

#### DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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# 1 CONTEXT FOR REVIEW

## 1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of an internal quality assurance review of the Library at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the site-visit component of which was undertaken in March 2020. The purpose of the review is to assist the RCSI to assure itself of the quality of each of its constituent units and to utilise learning from this developmental process, to effect enhancements.

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) was established by Royal Charter in 1784 to set and support professional standards for surgical training and practice in Ireland. RCSI has evolved considerably in the intervening years and is now both a university and a postgraduate training body in surgery and related specialties. This dual role brings many advantages to the institution, not least of which is the ability to offer education and training at all career levels (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate & professional) in medicine, surgery and related disciplines. In fact, it is the only surgical or medical Royal College in these islands to have university status. RCSI currently is the largest medical school in Ireland and awards medical degrees in Ireland, Bahrain and Malaysia. RCSI also provides undergraduate degree programmes in Pharmacy and Physiotherapy in Ireland, undergraduate Nursing degree programmes in Bahrain and masters (taught & by research) and doctoral programmes variously in Ireland, Bahrain, China, Dubai and Malaysia. RCSI became a Recognised College of the National University of Ireland (NUI) in 1978. Following an institutional review commissioned jointly by the Higher Education Authority and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, RCSI independent degree awarding powers were activated by ministerial order in 2010 pursuant to the terms of The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (Charters Amendment) Act 2003. The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 established RCSI as a Designated Awarding Body. In 2019 RCSI received authorization to use the description 'university' and to style itself accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019. RCSI is an independent, not-for-profit health sciences institution with charitable status in Ireland. The institution operates a primarily self-funding model, with State funding accounting for less than 20% of total income. The model is based on the education of a substantial cohort of international students alongside Irish/EU students.

## 1.2 Methodology for Review

### 1.2.1 Purpose of the Review

The self- assessment exercise is a process by which a Unit reflects on its mission and objectives, and analyses critically the activities it engages in to achieve these objectives. It provides for an evaluation of the Unit's performance of its functions, its services and its administration. In line with the RCSI strategic plan 'Growth and Excellence' it provides assurance to the College of the quality of the units' operations and facilitates a developmental process to effect improvement. The fundamental objectives of the review process are to:

- Monitor the quality of the student experience.
- Identify, encourage and disseminate good practice, and to identify challenges and how to address these.
- Provide an opportunity for units to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures for monitoring and enhancing quality and standards.

- Encourage the development and enhancement of these systems, in the context of current and emerging provision.
- Inform the College's strategic planning process.
- Provide an external benchmark on practice.
- Provide public information on the College's capacity to assure the quality and standards of its awards. The College's implementation of its quality procedures also enables it to demonstrate how it discharges its responsibilities for assuring the quality and standards of its awards, as required by the Universities Act 1997 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

### **1.2.2 The Review Process**

The key stages in the internal review process are:

1. Establishment of a Self-assessment Committee
2. Preparation of a Self-assessment Report (SAR) and supporting documentation
3. Site visit by a peer review group that includes external experts, both national and international
4. Preparation of a peer review group report that is made public
5. Development of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for implementation of the review report's recommendations (that is made public)
6. Follow-up to appraise progress against the QIP

### **1.3 Membership of the Peer Review Group**

- Professor Brian Bowe (Chair), Head of Academic Affairs & Assistant Registrar, Technological University Dublin.
- Mr John Fitzgerald, Director of Information Services & University Librarian, University College Cork.
- Dr. Paul Ayriss, Pro-Vice-Provost, UCL Library Services, Chief Executive of UCL Press, University College London.
- Professor Suzanne McDonough, Head of School of Physiotherapy, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.
- Ms Naomi Algeo, PhD Student, Trinity College Dublin & Reviewer with the National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP).

- Mr. Mark Collins (Technical Writer & Rapporteur)

### 1.3.1 Terms of Reference for the Peer Review Group

The terms of reference of the PRG are to:

- Evaluate critically the SAR and the supporting documentation
- Verify how well the aims and objectives of the Unit are being fulfilled, having regard to the available resources, and comment on the appropriateness of the Unit's mission, objectives and strategic plan
- Comment on how well the Unit fits with the strategic plans for the College as a whole
- Evaluate the Unit's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as outlined in the SAR
- Discuss any perceived strengths and weaknesses not identified in the SAR
- Assess the suitability of the working environment(s)
- Comment on any recommendations proposed by the Unit in its SAR
- Make appropriate recommendations for improvement, with due consideration of resource implications

The Peer Review Group visited RCSI from 2<sup>nd</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and held meetings with representatives/members/staff from:

- Quality Enhancement Office
- Library Management Team
- Library Staff
- RCSI support teams and business partners
- RCSI Senior Management Team
- RCSI Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Representatives
- Heads of School and Centre & Programme Directors
- Faculty Administrators
- Researchers, Research Managers & Research Support Units

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT OF THE UNIT

RCSI has had a library since its inception in 1784, but it was only with the appointment of the first qualified librarian in 1986 that the recognisable modern-day academic library services began on the main St Stephen's Green campus. These were extended to RCSI's main teaching hospital in 1988 when RCSI Library, Beaumont Hospital opened. A purpose-built, state of the art library, opened in the Mercer building in 1991 and served as the main campus library until 2017.

In 2017, the library and its staff, with the exception of the Heritage Collections team, relocated to the new academic education building on York Street. The use of the new library space and facilities, from both a staff and student perspective, was a particular focus of this review.

The changes in the physical library environment have coincided with a restructuring away from a focus on collections, physical spaces and internally facing library functional roles towards a focus on expertise, the provision of expert information services and externally facing specialist roles that enable and align with University core activities and strategies for education, research, reputation, engagement and clinical practice.

The RCSI Library, including RCSI Library Beaumont Hospital, serves all registered RCSI students including trainees & interns, RCSI academic, research, clinical and professional services staff including honorary and clinical lecturer appointments, alumni and exam candidates. The effectiveness and efficiency of the provision of library services across multiple sites and to different cohorts of users were explored as part of this review process.

This review also specifically examined the use and management of the Heritage Collections within RCSI, in serving the general public and non-affiliated researchers of the history of medicine. The service is responsible for providing the resources and services to support current education, research and clinical activities and for the long-term preservation and curation of outputs and records related to those activities.

The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) described the process and outcomes of the Library's reflections and evaluations of its facilities, activities and services. A Coordinating Committee was established and met six times from September 2019 to January 2020. The process adopted by the Coordinating Committee included engagement with staff, through Town-hall meetings, and stakeholders and identified all the issues that arose during the many PRG meetings with the staff and stakeholders, thus showing the effectiveness of the approach taken to this review.

The progress and developments made since the last review of the Library in 2013 were described in the SAR and evident to the Peer Review Group (PRG) through its meetings with staff and stakeholders. The SAR acknowledged the challenges associated with restructuring the library team while also adapting to a new physical environment and approach to service provision.

The Review Group met staff from within the Library and the wider College and also with key stakeholders. All participants who met the Review Group were provided with opportunities to contribute to the discussions and while the meetings were conducted in a purposeful and focused way, their general tone was informal, and views were expressed which spoke of good practice, but also some areas that presented challenges for the library.

The PRG did note that there were recommendations in the 2013 PRG report, which focused on budgetary and management issues that were once again raised in this review and may need to be revisited. These are referred to below in the recommendations and later in this report in the Planning, Organisation & Management section.

## **2.1 Commendations**

- The PRG would like to acknowledge the very high standard and quality of the Self-Assessment Report and accompanying documentation and the open and transparent approach to the self-assessment taken by the Library.

## **2.2 Recommendations**

- Given the increasing centrality of the Library in terms of student learning, new curriculum delivery, research developments such as Open Science, heritage, and public engagement, the PRG strongly recommends that the RCSI reconsiders the recommendation from the 2013 review to establish a Library Committee to ensure that a forum is created, with the appropriate membership, to facilitate informed discussions on matters pertaining to the Library and makes recommendations to either SMT or Academic Council. This would allow decisions pertaining to opening hours, space design and usage to be appropriately and transparently discussed and debated.

### **3 PLANNING, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT**

A comprehensive overview of the Mission, Strategic Planning, Organisation and Management of the unit was provided in the self- assessment report (SAR). There was a good sense of strategic alignment with the RCSI Strategy (2018-22), but there was an absence of a Library strategic plan and therefore no written agreed implementation goals. The review panel thought the Library management team needs to be more proactive in initiating dialogue and action around a Library Strategic Plan. This plan could articulate how the Library is engaging with the RCSI Digital Plan.

Within the RCSI management structures the library is considered an academic department within the faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. The library is not involved in developing annual or five year business plans. Participation in the RCSI business planning process would enable the library to identify resourcing needs with respect to annual operations and academic and research developments at institutional level.

Since the move to the new building there has been an appropriate increase in the numbers of library staff. There is a good management structure in the library with clearly defined functional roles yet still retaining the internal flexibility to respond, as appropriate, to short term goals and challenges. The library team has undergone a recent restructuring of its management structure, with some redefinition of existing library staff roles. This restructuring is taking some time to establish, and took place at the same time as the move into the new building. This has caused some challenges to staff whose roles have now changed. The review panel thought that these revised roles are appropriate to current staff grades. Furthermore the panel thought that within the Library Strategic Plan tasks and activities, undertaken by Library staff, could be prioritised to ensure a fair and appropriate allocation of workload.

There are good internal communication processes within teams in the library, this could be strengthened by communication at a more global level across teams via more regular staff meetings that all teams attend. This would enable the staff to influence decision making and receive/feed in information, as appropriate. There is a mechanism for formal communication between the Library and IT on a monthly basis; and informal communication with other RCSI services is active, such as Estates, HR and the Dean. The review panel thought that Representation at SMT is via the Dean, and formal recording of items brought by the Dean to SMT and the response to those items would improve communication processes.

#### **3.1 Commendations**

- The PRG commends the Library staff for their commitment to ensuring the success of the move to the new facility while also adapting to the new organisational structure, and remaining at the forefront of library technology.

#### **3.2 Recommendations**

- Develop a Library Strategic Plan that aligns to the RCSI Strategic Plan, which includes priorities, timelines, responsibilities and deliverables, and is underpinned by careful resource planning and risk management. This plan should be developed in partnership with the relevant schools and professional services. This should be agreed with the Dean and approved at, and subsequently supported by, SMT.
- Apply the procedures to develop and agree multiannual resource plans i.e. business planning in RCSI to the Library. It is the view of the PRG that the current resource planning model does not allow the Library to pursue its mission. A dedicated stand-alone multi-year resource plan for the Library should be submitted and not only be included in school/professional services' plans.



- Use the Library Strategic Plan to prioritise tasks and activities undertaken by Library staff and to ensure a fair and appropriate allocation of workload. This will also ensure the Library can provide appropriate resources to support ongoing and new RCSI priorities such as the development of the new medical curriculum.
- Develop a Library communication strategy to ensure Library staff are kept abreast of all relevant decisions and development within the RCSI, and to provide a channel by which they can formally communicate to Library management. This will ensure staff are fully aware of and can contribute to initiatives and decisions relating to the Library such as staff development and training and strategic priorities.
- Consider ways that decision making at all management levels (Institutional level and within the Library) relating to the Library can be made more transparent to ensure consistency and accountability.

## 4 FUNCTIONS, ACTIVITIES AND PROCESSES

The PRG was impressed by the feedback from students and staff in the RCSI. This came through in the submissions of the student representatives, who said that they thought the Library staff were 'marvellous'. Some academic staff felt that the Library had been 'exceptional' in its support for students in Dubai and Bahrain. Others said that the heart of the College was now York Street because of the central role which the new Library building plays in the student experience. Library staff themselves commented favourably on the amount of team work, levels of co-operation and meetings between groups of library staff to ensure successful outcomes.

The Library was praised throughout the review for the conscientious way it manages relationships with staff and students. Those Professional Service staff involved in supporting research said that they found the Library to be 'fantastic'; the Library was helpful for systematic reviews; and also helpful with Bibliometrics; its provision of online resources were seen as great. The same positive experience was reported by other Professional Service colleagues, such as Estates and IT who both currently address Business planning requests identified by the Library. This close co-operation is also demonstrated by the fact, for example, that IT has formal meetings with the Library once a month.

The Library clearly has outstanding historical collections of national importance to Ireland. There are 300 linear metres of material in the Mercer Building, with 36 linear metres in both the Mercer and 121 Vault, with an unknown quantity in the 123 Basement. All this material is used for exhibitions and events. The Heritage Collections team engage with the RCSI in a number of ways, for example in undertaking research on a wide range of topics connected with the College and its people past and present.

The lack of a separate Library Strategy, approved by the RCSI, is a serious gap in the Library's ability to function successfully, to deliver targeted activities and to organize its processes. In a well-run library service, the Library Strategy should stand at the centre of all its activity. If something is not in the Strategy, it should not be viewed as a priority.

The Library Strategy needs to nest beneath the general RCSI Strategy as a whole. The Library Strategy should determine priorities and resources for the Library as a whole, dictating areas of growth and development. Without such a Strategy, the Library cannot know if its chosen line of activity is the right one. The lack of a Library Strategy is a major omission and the recommendation of the PRG is that such a Strategy be developed, accompanied by a detailed Implementation Plan which identifies necessary resources and timescales and monitors successful delivery.

Students commented on perceived inequities of provision in these areas when they were being interviewed. For example, opening hours in exam periods are seen to be dictated by Medicine classes, where other Faculties have different examination times. Similarly, the booking processes for reserving rooms is not standard. Postgraduates have to reserve rooms in the new Library by e-mail, whereas undergraduates can book direct. These inequities are seen as unfair as there is not equality of opportunity for all student cohorts. The recommendation of the PRG is that such equity of provision be promoted and that Library processes be changed in order to deliver it.

It is a common recognition in university libraries offering services to Higher Education and to health service employees that the needs of each community differ. This is only to be expected, as the mission of Higher Education is to educate and to undertake research, whilst the mission of health services prioritises saving lives. It is certainly possible for a University Library to offer services to both communities. However, this needs to be handled with care. A common way to address the challenge is to develop Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with those communities who are not Higher Education staff or students, such as hospital staff. The role of the SLA would be to identify obligations on both sides – from the service provider and from those receiving the service – outlining also mechanisms for consultation, payment and monitoring.

Library staff considered that the decision making process in the Library was not transparent and, indeed, that the move to the new Library had introduced a new hierarchy into the decision making process. When asked if there were general Library Staff meetings, the staff were disappointed to say that there were not. Clearly, new platforms and social media allow different ways of communicating. However, these are not seen as adequate by some members of Library staff. The PRG therefore recommends that the Library look at the decision making process at all levels to address the perception that there is a lack of transparency, paying particular attention to the importance of effective communication channels.

The Library and the Research Office have worked closely together to try and develop a shared approach to Open Science in the RCSI. The Library led the development of policies pertaining to open access and research data management, Open Science is a new way in which research and education are conducted, reported, published, evaluated, curated and rewarded. Every university, certainly in Western Europe, is addressing the challenges which Open Science brings. LERU, the League of European Research Universities, has developed a Road Map with recommendations which enable a University to make progress in this area. This Road Map can be found at <https://www.leru.org/publications/open-science-and-its-role-in-universities-a-roadmap-for-cultural-change>. When asked, it was clear that there is no Open Science policy *per se* in the RCSI, and this is a weakness since many research funders are now making adherence to Open Science principles and practice a condition of grant. In discussion, it was clear that there was a lack of clarity between the Library and the Research Office about who was responsible for what in this area. The PRG has therefore recommended that the RCSI develop a coherent Open Science policy and strategy. This will enable the Library to identify its leadership role in this space, since it is often libraries who take the lead in certain areas of Open Science, such as Open Access to publications, FAIR and Open data and the Responsible use of Metrics.

The opening of the new Library building has clearly been a major development for the RCSI. As one interviewee said, the new building has become the heart of the College. This is a wonderful recognition of a remarkable building. Including classroom space on the upper floors, there are 700 spaces for learning for a student body of 3,000 undergraduate students and 4,500 postgraduates. This gives a learning space: student ratio of 1:9.3. This is probably too high a ratio to be comfortable. It cannot be denied but that demand has increased because of the excellence of the facility which the RCSI has provided. An additional issue, which the post-occupancy review should look at, is the quantity of the different types of space – quiet study, social study, group study, project and breakout space. Many comments were made by users that what was needed was more *quiet* study space. Others, for example postgraduates, want more physical books in the space. Currently there are 16,286 items in York Street in the working collection. Others, for example in the postgraduate training Faculties, want more electronic provision rather than being concerned about physical space in the new library building, The post-occupancy review recommended by the PRG should look at the role and occupancy of the new Library and address core issues such as the nature and use of the space in the context of overall service provision.

The historic and archival importance of the RCSI Heritage collections is beyond question. The PRG recognises this by the wide-ranging Recommendation for further work that it makes in the Report. Current storage condition are less than happy, and leaks are an ongoing problem. Finding aids exist for some of the material which is also being catalogued into the CALM system, but such work requires expert staff to undertake it. The PRG considers that there are opportunities for philanthropic giving to support the collections, which could be pursued. Also, there are further possibilities for public engagement, outreach and Citizen Science in making these collections more central to the offering of the RCSI. For example, were exhibition facilities to be available at St Stephen's Green, RCSI exhibitions could be a magnet for visitors in Dublin.

## 4.1 Commendations

- The PRG is impressed with the commitment of the library staff in supporting teaching, learning, and research and providing engagement opportunities across the RCSI, and their ability to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of students and staff.
- The PRG is very impressed with level of engagement between the library staff and RCSI students and staff. The supportive and professional approach adopted by the library staff was noted by many of the participants across multiple schools, roles and functions, during the panel's meetings. The collegial and positive relationship between the library and other units and stakeholders, such as IT, Estates and HR was evident throughout the review.
- The PRG is impressed by the Library's key role in promoting the importance and visibility of the historical collections and objects in terms of supporting research and furthering public engagement.

## 4.2 Recommendations

- Ensure equity in the provision and accessibility of Library support and facilities for all student cohorts, such as consistency in the opening hours around examinations times for all students, and the process for booking meeting rooms.
- Clarify and formalise relationships where library users are neither RCSI staff nor students, such as hospital staff. This could be done using service level agreements or memoranda of understanding.
- The RCSI should develop a framework for Open Science policy and practice with clear roles and responsibilities, which allows the Library to take a leadership role in advancing Open Science across all areas of the RCSI.
- Develop and support an RCSI strategy for the heritage collection which realises its potential to feed into a public engagement strategy and to promote the RCSI. The strategy should ensure the provision of the appropriate resources, including through philanthropy, to allow for adequate storage facilities, cataloguing and access.

## **5 MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**

RCSI Library operates across a broad resource base which includes a new library building, a multiannual budget allocation, a team of skilled staff, and an enabling IT infrastructure.

### **5.1 Library Buildings**

RCSI's new library is a vibrant state of the art facility embedded among other University services and activities in a new building at 26 York Street. The new library spaces have enabled the library team to significantly improve the quality and level of service it provides to the RCSI community. The new library incorporates a range of innovative approaches to supporting learning, programme delivery, and library service provision, and the library team is active in managing the new space and in addressing and resolving most post-occupation issues which have arisen. Challenges continue in relation to the design of the main service desk, some staff meeting and desk areas, and for students wishing to access sufficient quiet study spaces. In broad terms, the University is responsive to these issues, and to facilitate resolution. The PRG recommends that the University undertakes a post-occupancy review of the new library to maximise its effectiveness and ensure it is fulfilling its intended objectives. Such reviews are normally conducted by a third-party with relevant expertise.

The PRG notes the strong commitment by the University to the Library Heritage Collections housed in Mercer Building Level 3. The PRG shares concerns voiced around the efficacy of storage facilities for older material. This pressing issue could be addressed in an appropriate future University building project and should become a major objective of any University-level Heritage Strategy.

The PRG notes that the RCSI Library facilities at Beaumont Hospital are deemed adequate for needs for the foreseeable future.

### **5.2 Budget**

The Library and Finance Office work together in managing effectively the financial resources allocated to the Library.

The procedures for agreeing the library budget envelope is not clear to all stakeholders. Library management is not clear about how and where decisions are made in relation to library financial needs. In addition, library management feels at a distance from decisions made by SMT on applications for supplementary annual funding. The PRG is satisfied that the Dean presents and represents library applications at SMT and that the SMT and CEO make their decisions based on valid considerations and in the context of competing priorities. The PRG recommends that the Library be explicitly included in procedures to develop and agree multiannual resource plans i.e. business planning for academic units in RCSI. It is the view of the PRG that the current resource planning model does not allow the Library to fully pursue its mission. A dedicated stand-alone multi-year resource plan for the Library should be submitted and not only be included in school/professional services' plans. Additionally, the Dean and the Director of Library Services should regularise communication around SMT decision-making so that both requirements and outcomes are understood fully by all concerned.

Where possible, additional funding should be provided to enable the Library to maintain e-resources of importance to RCSI but which need to be cancelled by the IReL consortium.

There is valid concern about the sustainability of funding for archives and special collections. This issue needs to be addressed before the existing ring-fenced fund expires.

### 5.3 Staffing

The library team displays an impressive range of skills and competencies at all levels. The PRG is impressed with the commitment of the library staff in supporting teaching, learning, and research, and providing engagement opportunities across the RCSI, and their ability to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of students and staff. A recent staff restructuring has proven highly successful and all members of staff are to be congratulated on this.

Given the appropriate scale of the team, it is noted that many staff carry out more than one essential function. In this way, the Library is active in all of the areas which one would expect of a research-active academic institution. As the library team grows and roles become more carefully defined, it is important that communication be stepped up so that no individual or group feels isolated or is not apprised of decisions and developments. The PRG also recommends that the Library Strategic Plan be used to prioritise tasks and activities undertaken by library staff and to ensure a fair and appropriate allocation of workload. This will also ensure the Library can provide appropriate resources to support ongoing and new RCSI priorities such as the development of the new medical curriculum.

The Library participates actively and effectively in the University's Professional Development Planning process. Support is provided to staff for compliance with new workplace requirements, and in personal professional development and this is sponsored and overseen effectively by Library Management. The Library's own library-specific training and development programme is impressive and well structured, enabling the staff to fully exploit the opportunities provided by the new library spaces and to support new modes of research, teaching, and learning. Cooperation and collaboration with external bodies is impressive. A perception by some part-time staff that they are not eligible for PDP needs to be addressed. The PRG supports the desire of the Library to continue to provide its Customer Services Excellence training or similar.

The PRG is very impressed with the level of engagement between the library staff and RCSI students and staff. The supportive and professional approach adopted by the library staff was noted by many of the participants across multiple schools, roles and functions, during the panel's meetings. The collegial and positive relationship between the library and other units and stakeholders, such as IT, Estates and HR was evident throughout the review.

### 5.4 Information Technology

RCSI Library has built up an impressive IT infrastructure to manage content and other services, and to enable effective collaboration and communication within and beyond the campus. The Library enjoys an excellent relationship with the IT Services unit and both have collaborated well to deliver a range of successful development and implementation projects in the digital sphere. Both the library management system (LMS) and the Open Access institutional repository are at the heart of this infrastructure. The welcome focus on Open Access in procuring systems and managing content has allowed the Library to champion OA throughout campus as an important element of Open Science. The PRG urges the Library and the University to proceed apace with the procurement of a new LMS. The Library is to be commended for having developed such a wide range of active digital systems and services, including Preservica, LibGuides, Sentry Juno, EZ Proxy, and the excellent library website. It will be important to ensure that library staff skills continue to develop with the necessarily increasing prevalence of digital services and systems at the core of the modern academic library.

### 5.5 Commendations

- The PRG commends the RCSI on the design and quality of the new library building and for its commitment to the collaborative pedagogical approach embedded in the Transforming Healthcare

Education Project (THEP), which is working to develop state-of-the-art curricula for all RCSI professional degree programmes starting with Medicine.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

- PRG urges the Library and the University to proceed apace with the procurement of a new LMS.
- Undertake a post-occupancy review of the new library to maximise its effectiveness and ensure it is fulfilling the objectives of its design. Ideally, by a third-party with relevant expertise.

## 6 SERVICE USERS AND FEEDBACK

The Library team engage with a range of students and staff as part of day-to-day operations; undergraduate and post-graduate students, surgical trainees, RCSI professional services, and, academic, research and clinical staff members. They work across multiple sites including 26 York Street, the Mercer building, and Beaumont Hospital.

During the course of this review, the Library team has been described as *'very accessible'*, *'absolutely fantastic'*, and *'supportive'*. This feedback was evident across all cohorts; students, professional services, and other staff members.

The Library uses a range of informal and formal feedback mechanisms to capture feedback from its service users. These mechanisms include the Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) administered surveys, iGraduate Student Survey, UX (User Experience) Engagement, Library Statistics, and Direct Feedback, complaints and user Communications. Despite a range of service user feedback mechanisms, there has been challenges in obtaining feedback from cohorts beyond undergraduate students. Response rates in user feedback are particularly low among postgraduate students, academic, research and clinical staff. This can limit the Library team in identifying service development needs.

Feedback mechanisms, while varied, were sometimes viewed as too long and frequent, where *'survey fatigue'* was cited as a deterrent. Suggestions to overcome this included (i) *'quick-fire'* surveys, where they are flagged *'as a 3-minute survey'* and spread across the year, and (ii) *'randomly selecting'* cohorts with assurance that they would not be contacted for a set amount of time afterwards.

Core themes which have emerged from undergraduate feedback include limited availability of individual study space and the desire for extended opening hours, particularly around exam time. Since relocating to the new library space, overall undergraduate satisfaction has declined slightly from 80% to 76%.

An initiative that appears to have been well received in response to feedback is the #airspaceforall campaign. This seat reservation policy has been cited as *'a step in the right direction'*, however there remains further work to be done in this area. Evidence presented to the Peer Review Group suggested that implementation of the scheme could be *"stricter"* and that *'friendly discipline'* would be helpful.

The limited postgraduate feedback that has been captured highlights a sense that library services are geared towards undergraduate students. The number of respondents, however, is low and may not be reflective of the cohort as a whole. Inequity between some student groups was demonstrated during the review, where extended opening hours were aligned mostly with the exams of undergraduate medical students, and booking processes differed between undergraduate and postgraduate students, where postgraduate students do not have access to direct booking of rooms unlike undergraduate students. Despite this, the research postgraduates and surgical trainees that did respond indicated high levels of overall satisfaction with library services.

### 6.1 Commendations

- The PRG is very impressed with the level of engagement between the library staff and RCSI students and staff. The supportive and professional approach adopted by the library staff was noted by many of the participants across multiple schools, roles and functions, during the panel's meetings. The collegial and positive relationship between the library and other units and stakeholders, such as IT, Estates and HR was evident throughout the review.



## 6.2 Recommendations

- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms and approaches to gather feedback from Library stakeholders including users. This will ensure that informed decisions can be taken at the appropriate levels within RCSI.

## 7 SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Commendations

- The PRG would like to acknowledge the very high standard and quality of the Self-Assessment Report and accompanying documentation and the open and transparent approach to the self-assessment taken by the Library.
- The PRG commends the RCSI on the design and quality of the new library building and for its commitment to the collaborative pedagogical approach embedded in the THEP.
- The PRG commends the Library staff for their commitment to ensuring the success of the move to the new facility while also adapting to the new organisational structure, and remaining at the forefront of library technology.
- The PRG is very impressed with level of engagement between the library staff and RCSI students and staff. The supportive and professional approach adopted by the library staff was noted by many of the participants across multiple schools, roles and functions, during the panel's meetings. The collegial and positive relationship between the library and other units and stakeholders, such as IT, Estates and HR was evident throughout the review.
- The PRG is impressed with the commitment of the library staff in supporting teaching, learning, and research and providing engagement opportunities across the RCSI, and their ability to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of students and staff.
- The PRG is impressed by the Library's key role in promoting the importance and visibility of the historical collections and objects in terms of supporting research and furthering public engagement.

### 7.2 Recommendations

- Given the increasing centrality of the Library in terms of student learning, new curriculum delivery, research developments such as Open Science, heritage, and public engagement, the PRG strongly recommends that the RCSI reconsiders the recommendation from the 2013 review to establish a Library Committee to ensure that a forum is created, with the appropriate membership, to facilitate informed discussions on matters pertaining to the Library and makes recommendations to either SMT or Academic Council. This would allow decisions pertaining to opening hours, space design and usage to be appropriately and transparently discussed and debated
- Develop a Library Strategic Plan that aligns to the RCSI Strategic Plan, which includes priorities, timelines, responsibilities and deliverables, and is underpinned by careful resource planning and risk management. This plan should be developed in partnership with the relevant schools and professional services. This should be agreed with the Dean and approved at, and subsequently supported by, SMT.
- Apply the procedures to develop and agree multiannual resource plans i.e. business planning in RCSI to the Library. It is the view of the PRG that the current resource planning model does not allow the Library to pursue its mission. A dedicated stand-alone multi-year resource plan for the Library should be submitted and not only be included in school/professional services' plans.

- Use the Library Strategic Plan to prioritise tasks and activities undertaken by Library staff and to ensure a fair and appropriate allocation of workload. This will also ensure the Library can provide appropriate resources to support ongoing and new RCSI priorities such as the development of the new medical curriculum.
- Develop a Library communication strategy to ensure Library staff are kept abreast of all relevant decisions and development within the RCSI, and to provide a channel by which they can formally communicate to Library management. This will ensure staff are fully aware of and can contribute to initiatives and decisions relating to the Library such as staff development and training and strategic priorities.
- Consider ways that decision making at all management levels (Institutional level and within the Library) relating to the Library can be made more transparent to ensure consistency and accountability.
- Ensure equity in the provision and accessibility of Library support and facilities for all student cohorts, such as consistency in the opening hours around examinations times for all students, and the process for booking meeting rooms.
- Clarify and formalise relationships where library users are neither RCSI staff nor students, such as hospital staff. This could be done using service level agreements or memoranda of understanding.
- The RCSI should develop a framework for Open Science policy and practice with clear roles and responsibilities, which allows the Library to take a leadership role in advancing Open Science across all areas of the RCSI.
- PRG urges the Library and the University to proceed apace with the procurement of a new LMS.
- Undertake a post-occupancy review of the new Library to maximise its effectiveness and ensure it is fulfilling the objectives of its design. Ideally, by a third-party with relevant expertise.
- Develop and support an RCSI strategy for the heritage collection which realises its potential to feed into a public engagement strategy and to promote the RCSI. The strategy should ensure the provision of the appropriate resources, including through philanthropy, to allow for adequate storage facilities, cataloguing and access.
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms and approaches to gather feedback from Library stakeholders including users. This will ensure that informed decisions can be taken at the appropriate levels within RCSI.

## 8 APPENDIX 1: SITE VISIT SCHEDULE

Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Mtg. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Mon 2 Mar	16.00 – 16.30	30 mins	1	<b>Welcome and Introduction for PRG</b> Director of Quality & Quality Reviews Manager	Robert Smith Room
Mon 2 Mar	16.30 – 18.45	145 mins	2	Private Planning Meeting for PRG	Robert Smith Room
Mon 2 Mar	19.00 – 21.00	120 mins	3	Dinner PRG & QEO	TBC
Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Mtg. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Tues 3 Mar	08.45 – 09.10	25 mins	4	Review of preparatory work	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	09.15 – 10.00	45 mins	5	<b>Meeting with Head of Unit and Library Management Team</b> Theme: Current strategic approach; challenges; and future direction.	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	10.10 – 11.00	50 mins	6	<b>Meeting with Library Staff representatives</b> Theme: Working environment; career development and opportunities; CPD opportunities; empowerment; team work; team structures; collaboration and support; and reward and recognition.	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	11.05 – 11.25	20 mins	7	Tea/coffee. Private meeting time for PRG	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	11.30 – 13.00	90 mins	8	11.30 – 12.30 Tour of Heritage Facilities <b>12.30 – 13.00 Tour of 26 York St. Library</b> Theme: Staff environments; standards of current heritage collections stores; and space as a service.	Mercer Building, No. 26
Tues 3 Mar	13.10 – 13.50	40 mins	9	Lunch. Private meeting time for PRG	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	14.00 – 14.50	50 mins	10	<b>Meeting with key representatives from IT Dept. and Estate &amp; Support Services</b> Theme: Inter and co-dependencies for service delivery and development; input mechanisms to campus development and digital environment plans; input mechanisms for other capital	Robert Smith Room

Tues 3 Mar	15.00 – 15.45	45 mins	11	<b>Meeting with members of RCSI SMT</b> Theme: Library alignment with current strategy and future directions; resourcing; clarity of mission for library services – what does the service lead on? who is Library expected to serve and expectation of service levels?	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	15.55 – 16.15	20 mins	12	Tea/coffee. Private meeting time for PRG	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	16.15 – 17.00	45 mins	13	<b>Meeting with student representatives at undergraduate and postgraduate level</b> Theme: Services and supports for student learning and research activities.	Robert Smith Room
Tues 3 Mar	17.00 – 17.50	50 mins	14	Review of afternoon's meetings and planning for next day	Robert Smith Room
Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Mtg. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Wed 4 Mar	08.40 – 09.00	20 mins	15	Review of preparatory work	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	09.10 – 09.55	45 mins	16	<b>Meeting with Heads of School and key stakeholders in teaching &amp; learning development across all schools</b> Theme: Strategic alignment of library services with current and future research, teaching and learning needs; strategic enablers/inhibitors for T&L strategy e.g. online/blended learning, THEP, simulation; feedback mechanisms; and recommendations.	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	10.05 – 10.50	45 mins	17	<b>Meeting with academic staff representatives</b> Theme: Expert services to support educators and the curricula.	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	10.50 – 11.10	20 mins	18	Tea/coffee. Private meeting time for PRG	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	11.15 – 12.00	45 mins	19	<b>Meeting with key representatives in the strategic development of research in RCSI</b> Theme: Strategic alignment and activities enabling the research agenda e.g. library leadership on Open Access; partnering to progress research data management needs; bibliometric services; and developing an Open Science culture.	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	12.10 – 12.55	45 mins	20	<b>Meeting with staff representatives focusing on Library support for research</b> Theme: Expert services to researchers and the library as a research partner.	Sir Thomas Myles Room
	13.05 – 13.50	45 mins	21	Lunch. Private meeting time for PRG	Sir Thomas Myles Room

Wed 4 Mar	14.00 – 14.45	45 mins	22	<b>Meeting with business partners and representatives from professional support departments</b> Theme: Relationships; interdependencies; success inhibitors/enablers; and recommendations.	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	14.55 – 15.40	45 mins	23	<b>Meeting with key stakeholders from RCSI postgraduate faculties, SPFB and clinical sites</b> Theme: Service needs and expectations for their constituent user groups; relationships; success inhibitors/enablers; and recommendations.	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	15.50 – 16.10	20 mins	24	Tea/coffee. Private meeting time for PRG	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Wed 4 Mar	16.10 – 16.55	45 mins	25	<b>Meeting with key stakeholders engaged in heritage collection related activity</b> Theme: Strategic alignment; standards for storage facilities; leveraging the uniqueness of the collections; and public engagement & outreach	Dr Mary Emily Dowson Room
Wed 4 Mar	17.00 – 18.00	60 mins	26	Review of afternoon's meetings and discussion of commendations & recommendations.	Dr Mary Emily Dowson Room
Date	Time	Dur. Mins	Mtg. No.	Mtg. Title	Venue
Thurs 5 Mar	08.30 – 10.45	135 mins	27	Private meeting time for PRG – discussion and finalisation of commendations and recommendations for all sections. Tea/coffee at 10.00	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Thurs 5 Mar	10.45 – 11.15	30 mins	28	Private meeting time with QEO	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Thurs 5 Mar	11.15 – 11.30	15 mins	29	Meeting with Head of unit & QEO	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Thurs 5 Mar	11.35 – 11.55	20 mins	30	Exit presentation to all unit staff	Dr Mary Emily Dowson Room
Thurs 5 Mar	12.00 – 13.00	60 mins	31	Lunch & private meeting time with QEO	Sir Thomas Myles Room
Thurs 5 Mar	13.00			Review Ends	