



The
British
Psychological
Society

Response to the University of London consultation on the future role of Senate House Library

The British Psychological Society thanks CHEMS Consulting and the University of London for the opportunity to respond to this consultation and to make the case for keeping the Psychology Library intact and available as now.

The British Psychological Society ("the Society") is the learned and professional body, incorporated by Royal Charter, for psychologists in the United Kingdom. The Society has a total membership of over 47,000 and is a registered charity.

Under its Royal Charter, the key objective of the Society is "to promote the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of members by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge".

The Society maintains the Register of Chartered Psychologists and has a code of conduct and investigatory and disciplinary systems in place to consider complaints of professional misconduct relating to its members. The Society is an examining body granting certificates and diplomas in specialist areas of professional applied psychology.

We are content for our response, as well as our name and address, to be made public. We are also content for CHEMS Consulting or the University of London to contact us in the future in relation to this consultation response. Indeed we would welcome the opportunity for a face-to-face meeting to explore some of the issues further, for example the complicated issue of comparative psychology library provision between individual college libraries and Senate House. Please direct all queries to:-

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This response was prepared on behalf of the Research Board by Peter Dillon-Hooper, Manager of the Society's History of Psychology Centre. We hope you find our comments useful.

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Chair, Research Board

Response

Brief History of the Collaboration between Senate House Library and the British Psychological Society

The roots of the Society's own library collection can be traced back to 1906, when journals were first bought to be circulated among the few members there then were. Over the years the library, and the Society itself, grew, occupying several different homes in London. In 1947 the library, which had been moved out of the Society's premises in London to the University of Nottingham at the outbreak of war, was transferred 'temporarily' to Senate House Library. The collection consisted almost entirely of journals and has been there ever since, continuously developed and added to. In 1958, the *de facto* permanent nature of the arrangements was regularised by agreement. In 1970, the University of London created a Psychology Library within Senate House Library, and the Society agreed to place its library within it. At that time, it represented about 80% of Senate House's psychology holdings.

The Psychology Collections at Senate House Library

Today, the Psychology Library collection comprises approximately:

- 600 academic journal titles (of which about 320 belong to the Society);
- 350 other serial titles ('Advances', Research Reviews, Bulletins, Conference Proceedings, Abstracts, etc.) (of which about 80 belong to the Society);
- 28,000 monographs (of which about 2,000 belong to the Society).

A reliable figure for the number of volumes that represent the 950 serial titles has proved impossible to come by. Of the 600 journal titles, about 300 are current. Half of the current journals are received either through subscriptions paid for by the Society or through exchange arrangements with the Society, whereby journal publishers and editors send titles in exchange for the Society's own published journals.

Many of the serial titles include pre-war runs, some going back to the 1890s. The collection also includes many foreign language journals, as well as titles from other English-speaking countries. Senate House is also fortunate in having an extensive collection of early texts readily available on the shelves, which are of especial value to those with research interests in the history of psychology. Few of these older and foreign-language journals are available from the major online providers.

We understand that the Senate House Psychology Library, incorporating the British Psychological Society Library, is one of the largest and most wide-ranging psychology collections in the UK (particularly with regard to back runs of journals), and is doubtless a significant library in European terms. Altogether it represents a nationally, perhaps internationally, important resource, the unique result of a 50-year collaboration between the Society and the University of London. Unfortunately, the recent Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) review did not resolve the issue of what to do with major subject collections like this.

The British Psychological Society's Contribution to Library Development

Over the years, the Society has helped, and continues to help, develop the University's psychology collection in various ways:

- direct subscriptions to journals;
- journal exchanges with the Society's own journals;
- deposit of the Society's own journals;
- payment for binding all the above;
- deposit of the Society's own books (BPS Books, now an imprint of BPS Blackwell);
- deposit of the Society's *Bulletin*, now *The Psychologist*;
- deposit of the Society's member network publications (Divisions, Sections, etc.);
- deposit of various historical book collections from time to time;
- deposit of miscellaneous Society publications (position papers, working party reports, guidelines, codes of conduct, etc.);
- arranging outside funding for cataloguing.

Content of the Agreement between the University of London and the British Psychological Society

The 1958 agreement provided that the Society would continue to make its library collection available to the University, in return for which the University would continue to provide a home for it and provide the services of professional library staff to administer the library and make it available to readers. In particular, the agreement said that:

- the Society's collection remains the property of the Society;
- the intention of both the Society and the University of London was to keep the collection permanently at the University of London Library (ULL), but that the arrangement could be brought to an end by either side with reasonable notice (two years was suggested as reasonable).

It was also noted that "if, to avoid unnecessary duplication, either library ceases to obtain any particular journals now, the separation of the two libraries at any time in the future would be harmful to both".

The agreement further provided for various working arrangements to do with cataloguing, binding and insuring the periodicals and books, and with arranging journal exchanges. It also expressly gave Society members (subject to limits) reference access to the whole of the University of London Library.

A Society working party, set up in 1972 to report on the library arrangements, made various recommendations to do with preserving the identity of the library, accessions policies, budgets, and other matters, and also recommended a five-year notice period for termination by either side. Interestingly, shortly before the then Psychology Librarian at Senate House retired in 1988, she referred in an internal memorandum to the University's Library Board (copied to the Society's Executive Secretary) to a notice period of five years for unilateral termination of the agreement.

Value to University of London Students/Researchers

In the academic year 2006/7, over 1,200 students enrolled in University of London colleges who registered as members of Senate House Library gave psychology as their main area of study. Because the library is predominantly reference-only, it is impossible to know how much cross-disciplinary use is made of the psychology collections. Since many non-psychology courses (postgraduate as well as undergraduate) contain psychology modules or have psychology components, the figure is likely to be quite high. Psychology is by its nature a cross-disciplinary field of study. A particular example here is the unusually large number (133 in 2006/7) of University College London (UCL) medical students registered to use the Library, given that the Library has only a few basic medical books and journals. These students may well be primarily interested in the psychology collection, especially as some medical students actually do a psychology degree in a year in the middle of their course.

A high percentage of the Psychology Library total stock is reference only (80%), and the most heavily used recent stock is 95% reference only. With just about no borrowing, texts are almost guaranteed to be available to users. An advantage of a certain amount of duplication between college libraries and the Psychology Library is that with this high reference-only percentage students should still be able to find a copy of a book in the Psychology Library when all the copies in their college library are out on loan.

The Psychology Library aims to provide resources at all levels from undergraduate to research. The college libraries have historically concentrated their library resources in serving the direct needs of their undergraduate and postgraduate students. The development of the Psychology Library at Senate House has not been so constrained. Senate House therefore offers a greater opportunity for students to enhance their learning by going beyond their reading lists. For example, in 2006/7 there were 90 Royal Holloway psychology students registered at Senate House – an hour's journey away – a striking fact, which one senior Royal Holloway academic puts down to most third-year students needing to use Senate House for dissertations, projects, and so on, that require wider and more specialist reading than can be provided by the college.

In a similar vein, college libraries will naturally have developed their psychology collections according to the specialisms they teach (e.g. social psychology at the London School of Economics). The centrally available Psychology Library, by contrast, offers users a greater opportunity to research across specialisms. Psychology as a discipline comprises many subdisciplines; it would be taking a backward step to isolate those specialist fields from each other. There are commonalities that ought to be reflected in library collections to counteract any tendency towards academic narrowing. The Psychology Library collection at Senate House combines such breadth of coverage with deep historical roots.

The Psychology Library offers a wider range of online resources than individual colleges offer. These include PsycInfo (which the Institute of Education does not have), PsycArticles (which neither Goldsmiths nor the Institute of Education has) and Academic Search Premier (which we believe none of the colleges has) – a general academic resource that includes a lot of full-text psychology journals.

Senate House Library is open on Saturdays throughout the year, including the summer vacation when college libraries are typically closed.

Value to Colleges of the Psychology Library and the Collaboration with the British Psychological Society

The Psychology Library is a unique shared resource among the colleges, and is, according to one college librarian, 'one of Senate House Library's main strengths'. Sir Ivor Crewe, in his report to HEFCE on funding for research libraries, pointed out that there had been 'strong praise' for the psychology collection at Senate House. The existence of the Psychology Library has, we understand, been used by colleges to enhance their standing in Quality Assurance Agency teaching quality assessments.

It would be beyond the resources of any individual college library to achieve a similar level of coverage, perhaps even in their own specialisms. The value to smaller colleges with specialised courses is particularly great, where there is not easy access to general psychology journals or a wide range of books. As the convenor of one MA programme in a small college put it: "The needs of small specialist colleges like ours should be taken into account in the overall review."

The existence of the BPS Library on the open shelves since 1970 might well have given some individual college libraries the opportunity to divert resources into other subject areas and to develop them better than they would otherwise have been able to do. And some colleges, particularly Bloomsbury colleges, will have benefited from the proximity of Senate House, in that it has allowed them to develop their psychology and other collections in complementary ways. For this reason the library provision at Birkbeck, for example, is largely teaching oriented and small (the psychology collection in particular), which means that most Birkbeck psychology postgraduates and undergraduates register at Senate House to access the psychology research resources.

As already mentioned, it was noted in 1958 that any future separation of the two libraries would be harmful if particular journals had ceased to be obtained by either library to avoid duplication. Indeed, the practice has been to develop the collection as a whole without duplications. It is unlikely that the Society library has been badly affected by this, but the University-owned elements of the collection would be seriously depleted by the removal of major journal runs that it might have acquired for itself had the collaboration not been in place.

The monograph collection contains many texts not easily available elsewhere. Though the Society-owned part of the monograph collection is small by comparison to its journals holdings, much of the Society's collection is represented by rare or difficult-to-find texts. The monograph collection as a whole has value not only as a scientific resource but also as an important history of psychology collection.

Summary and Recommendations

The University of London's Psychology Library is a unique academic resource in size, breadth and depth; and no doubt unique in its history and development. Its value to psychology students and departments of psychology within the University is clear. Its cross-disciplinary value is not easy for us to establish, but could be considerable.

The Society wishes to maintain the *status quo* with regard to all the arrangements it has with the University of London and Senate House Library. However, we recognise that there may have to be changes. In which case we suggest the following principles for settling a future for the Psychology Library:

- The Psychology Library, including both the University-owned material and the British Psychological Society Library, should be treated as a single entity, because it is in the collection as a whole that its unique value lies.
- The development of any alternative future for the Psychology Library should be a collaborative project between the University and the Society.
- Any changes in holdings, location, terms of access, or any other matter affecting the terms of the existing agreement between the University and the Society, will need to be agreed to by the parties.
- In the event of failure to agree, no unilateral action affecting the terms of the existing agreement can be taken by either the University or the Society without reasonable notice; which notice period will be a minimum of two years, but could be longer depending on the circumstances.

End.