

Editorial

After the success of the first conference¹, the second Libraries without Number conference was held September 1998. As the organisers of this conference, we are grateful to Fred Guy and the editorial board of *Education for Information* for allowing us to publish the papers from this conference in this special issue of the journal. We would also like to thank all the authors for their papers which illustrate the use of a variety of qualitative research methods to investigate library and information services.

As Crawford notes in his article, standard LIS performance measures² are still mainly quantitative. However, these papers demonstrate the use of qualitative methods, often in association with quantitative methods, to provide a richer source of information for decision-making.

Oulton and Fisher discuss the application of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) in three studies carried out by Manchester Metropolitan University: a study of staff development needs as a key element in a study of change in higher education in the UK; the DECIMAL Project; and the LISTEN Project. The origins and method of CIT are described.

Ajibade and Leach, members of the Database Resources Research Group at City University, report on the methodology used to conduct a study on resource allocation strategies for electronic database services in academic libraries. The approach taken for this study was to conduct case study interviews with practitioners in the academic library sector. The paper discusses and assesses the methodology adopted in relation to the results desired and obtained.

The eLib FIDDO project based at Loughborough University aims to provide library managers and others with reliable and relevant information to support policy decisions on document delivery. Jacobs and Morris report on interviews held with senior librarians about the future of document delivery. The findings contribute toward an understanding of who will be the winners and losers in any new set of arrangements for document delivery.

Crawford reports the results of investigation into the use of an 'electronic floor' (with 166 networked PCs and Macs) at Glasgow Caledonian University's Caledonian Library and Information Centre. Because of the lack of reliable pre-existing performance indicators on which to base a reliable strictly quantitative questionnaire, a qual-

¹ Papers from this conference were published in a special issue of this journal: *Education for Information*, 15(4), Winter 1997.

² De Montfort University (1994) Library performance indicators and library management models (PROLIB/PI): Draft report of the study undertaken on behalf of the CEC DGXIII

itative methodology was adopted principally consisting of a combination of focus groups and a questionnaire administered to students in the process of using workstations. Results from the two surveys show a strong measure of agreement. Preliminary results lead him to conclude that, amongst other things, there is little understanding of the difference between 'general' IT services and electronic information services; few part-time students use the Electronic Floor; email is the most widely-used service; and much internet use is for recreational purposes.

The Monitoring and Advisory Unit (MAU) is an agent of the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and is based at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Bex and Miller, members of the MAU, report the results of a number of focus groups held with JISC dataset service users in early 1998. The results were used to inform the design of a national questionnaire survey done later that year.

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