



**Peer Review Group Report for Professional Support Areas**

**LIBRARY REVIEW**

**Date: 22 - 24 February 2023**

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# 1 Introduction and Context

The broad approach to quality assurance and enhancement in DCU is that it aims to promote and develop a culture of quality throughout all aspects of the University. The framework derives from the spirit of Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement enshrined in the Universities Act (1997), which is the legislative basis for quality throughout the Irish University sector, and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.

The DCU processes for quality reviews at DCU are further aligned to the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the published guidelines of Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI).

This Report presents the findings of a quality review of the DCU Library, following a visit by the Peer Review Group undertaken on 22-24 February 2023.

## 1.1 Overview of the Area under Review

Since the last Quality Review in 2015 the Library has undergone significant change due to the incorporation process which was completed in 2016 and saw the incorporation of St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Mater Dei Institute of Education and the Church of Ireland College of Education into DCU. This had an extraordinary impact on the Library in terms of campus presence, collections, staff and services and it has resulted in the Library being physically located on three sites - the Glasnevin, St Patrick's and All Hallows campuses. In addition, the challenges of the Covid pandemic have led to rapid development and deployment of a variety of services to ensure continued access to collections, support and content. This also presented an opportunity to develop more innovative services, grow the Library's collections and digital infrastructure.

The role of the Library is to provide information, content, collection and library services and support DCU students and staff on three campuses. The Library manages and provides access to a variety of rich and diverse collections in printed and online formats. It offers access to individual and group study areas and common spaces, expert assistance and information services, as well as learning, research and teaching support through in-person and online tutorials and learning resources. The Library has a long-standing commitment to external engagement and outreach and it has developed active partnerships with a number of local community groups.

The DCU Library is responsible for three libraries: *Cregan Library* on St. Patrick's Campus, *O'Reilly Library* on Glasnevin Campus, and *Woodlock Hall Library* on All Hallows Campus. In addition to the three physical library sites, the Library hosts a significant presence within the DCU online domain. This includes access to a range of electronic resources, the Library search, online chat, online exhibitions, digitised archives, LibGuides and other learning resources. The Library social media channels also link out from here.

The Library falls under the responsibility of the Deputy President and is aligned to the academic functions and services within the University. The Library has an FTE allocation of 64.5 and an overall headcount of 93 staff, and is currently holding 5.5 FTE vacancies. It is divided into *four Directorates*: Collections & Digital Services, Research & Teaching, Special

Collections & Archives, and Public Services & Outreach. Each Directorate is headed by an Associate Director reporting to the University Librarian. The *Library Leadership Team* comprises the University Librarian and four Associate Directors. The University Librarian has responsibility for the strategic direction and operational management of the Library and represents the Library on a number of internal and external boards and groups. The University Librarian reports to the Deputy President and sits on a number of University Committees such as University Research Committee, Head and Deans Committee, Academic Council, Quality Committee. The Associate Directors lead their own directorates and teams and actively contribute to shaping and forming the overall strategic direction of DCU Library.

The *Collections and Digital Services Directorate* has responsibility for acquiring, processing and maintaining access to print and electronic collections. It has responsibility for the Library digital information systems and ensuring these are online and available. The *Public Services and Outreach Directorate* manages the issue and information desk functions where users can engage directly or online with staff to assist in answering requests and queries. This Directorate also manages the outreach and events functions in addition to the website and social media channels. The *Special Collections and Archives Directorate* manages and develops the Library's archives strategy and the acquisition of legacy and new special collections and archive collections. The directorate contributes to the Library's digitisation and digital humanities strategies. The *Research and Teaching Directorate* provides value added subject services and supports to Schools and Faculties including digital literacy, citation and referencing, and research services. This Directorate also manages the DCU Press and DORAS Open Access Repository. In addition to the four Directorates, there is also a *Planning and Administration Unit* which is responsible for financial, HR, reporting and governance functions and for supporting the work of the Library Leadership Team in relation to all strategic and annual planning activities such as budget submission and workforce planning.

## **2 Approach to Self-Assessment**

### **2.1 Quality Review Committee**

The self-assessment phase of the Quality Review was led by an internal Quality Review Committee (QRC). Committee membership was as follows:

- John McDonough (Chair), University Librarian
- Samantha Groves (Co-coordinator), Assistant Librarian, Planning & Admin Unit
- Amanda Halpin, Assistant Librarian, Collections & Digital Services
- Aoife Murphy, Senior Library Assistant, Public Services & Outreach
- Carol Kinsella, Library Attendant, Public Services & Outreach
- Cliona Ni Liathain, Library Assistant, Public Services & Outreach
- Darragh Wilson, Library Assistant, Collections & Digital Services
- Ellen Breen, Associate Director, Research & Teaching
- Liam O Dwyer, Assistant Librarian, Special Collections & Archives
- Marie Doyle, Senior Library Assistant, Planning & Administration Unit
- Orla Nic Aodha, Associate Director, Public Services & Outreach
- Ronan Cox, Assistant Librarian, Research & Teaching
- Shauna McDermott, Assistant Librarian, Public Services & Outreach
- Victoria Smyth, Assistant Librarian, Collections & Digital Services

The Director of Quality Promotion met with the committee in September 2022 to outline the Quality Review (QR) process and to answer any questions. The committee met approximately eight times between September 2022 and January 2023, usually on Zoom. All Library staff were advised on the Quality Review process at the start of each SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges) away day session in December 2022. Each section of the SAR was allocated to committee members based on their areas of interest and expertise. A dedicated shared Google drive was created enabling members to feed into documents, save information for appendices etc. A Quality Review page was set up on the Library Intranet to inform staff of the process, minutes of the meetings, Peer Review Group and SAR workflow. A member of the committee circulated an update to all staff after each meeting.

The PRG notes that Library staff were generally satisfied with the level of communication from the QRC regarding the SAR, the Quality Review process and the rationale for the SWOC exercise, and felt included in the Quality Review process. The PRG was also impressed by the robust, honest and inclusive nature of the approach to self-assessment.

### **2.2 The Self-Assessment Report**

The PRG recognises excellent work and a high level of engagement in the self-assessment process by the Library staff. The methodology and approach to self-assessment were well-structured and effective. The Self-Assessment Report (SAR) is a comprehensive document that outlines in detail the role, functions and structure of the Library, and includes the self-reflective analysis of the five main areas of consideration in Quality Review.

To assess how the Library is viewed by its users and peers, two engagement methods were used by the QRC: the University wide survey undertaken in November 2022 and a targeted

focus group held with professional staff in January 2023. Both methods produced important stakeholder feedback, and the PRG appreciates additional information on the results of the survey and the focus group discussions provided in Appendices L, M, N and O. While the PRG found the process of collecting stakeholders' views data largely well thought out, the PRG is of the view that some stakeholder groups were underrepresented and were not engaged with sufficiently during this process. Specifically, the PRG believes that given the lower levels of engagement with the survey among the postgraduate students and academic staff, it would have been beneficial to adopt a qualitative approach and conduct focus groups with these two cohorts to tease out in more detail these groups' issues and priorities in relation to the Library's activities and services.

Overall, the structure of the SAR is logical and clear, and its evaluative approach assessing the Library's operational activities and processes is evident. However, the PRG is of the opinion that the SAR could have been more self-reflective in relation to strategic planning and identification of the Library's strategic priorities in the longer term, as well as the overall strategic and leadership role of the Library within DCU. The PRG acknowledges that due to significant changes to the Library brought by the Incorporation process and the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic, it is understandable that the Library's priorities over the last 5-6 years have largely been on ensuring the continued delivery of expert services to the DCU community. The PRG feels that there is now a good opportunity for the Library to develop its wider strategic direction in the longer term and decide what areas the Library could take a leadership role within the University. Such self-reflection on strategic planning and development would be particularly timely given that the University's strategic plan for 2023-2028 is soon to be finalised and the constituent Library Strategy is to be developed in alignment with the University's Strategic Plan. Once the strategic planning at the University level and the Library level has taken place, the Library should work closely with HR to ensure that the staff structure is appropriate to enable strategic delivery.

The SAR provides a comprehensive SWOC analysis with which the PRG largely agrees, however the PRG has made some changes to this based on the information gathered during the Quality Review visit. This revised SWOC is presented in section 6.1.

### **3 Approach Taken By Peer Review Group**

#### **3.1 Peer Review Group Members**

Membership of the Peer Review Group for the Quality Review was:

- Mr. Masud Khokhar, University Librarian and Keeper of the Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds, (Chair)
- Ms. Ciara McCaffrey, Interim Director, Library & Information Services, University of Limerick
- Ms. Margaret Hayes, Retired professional, Former Dublin City Librarian
- Dr. Ecaterina (Katya) McDonagh, Senior Research Officer, Dublin City University
- Dr. Jean Hughes, Director of Strategic Initiatives, President's Office, Dublin City University

- Mr. Waqar Ahmed, International PhD Communications student, Dublin City University

### **3.2 Overview of Approach Taken by Peer Review Group**

The Peer Review Group (PRG) was given extensive documentation in advance of and during the visit, which included the Self Assessment Report, additional documentation about the library's performance (appendices), the draft working timetable for the visit, initial impressions template, and DCU quality review process documentation.

The review started with the Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research explaining the review process and providing clarity in the remit and responsibilities of the PRG. Mr. Masud Khokhar agreed to chair the group, while Dr. Ecaterina (Katya) McDonagh took on the responsibility of the Coordinating Reviewer of the PRG. The chair agreed to give the exit presentation to the library staff at the end of the review process. It was also noted to the PRG that after a specific time (around five-six months after review visit), the Chair of the PRG and the Coordinating Reviewer will be asked to participate in a follow-up meeting to discuss and approve the Quality Improvement Plan (including a timeframe for implementation) put forward by the Library.

The PRG commended the excellent organisation and comprehensive nature of the quality review process. The structure of the quality review visit and the schedule of meetings, the discussions with key audiences and stakeholders, and the tours of the facilities worked very well and demonstrated excellent engagement. The areas of focus highlighted within the SAR allowed the PRG members to identify key themes to explore during the course of the review. In addition to enquiring about the focus areas, follow up and additional questions were encouraged from all members of the PRG. The PRG Chair distributed responsibilities of the enquiry narrative to members of PRG, which were also assigned as their areas of focus for report writing.

The approach for each session varied based on the stakeholder group. Before each session, there was a brief discussion about the sequence in which PRG members would ask questions, the purpose of the questions, and the formality of the session itself. After each session, there was an attempt to collect thoughts and observational knowledge, although this was not always possible in practice. In many cases, the recollection was done at dinner at the end of the day, which worked well. Sessions with Library staff and DCU students were kept more informal to allow open expression of views and ideas. For members of the Library Leadership Team, academic staff, and senior stakeholders, more specific questions were asked to dig deeper into focus areas.

Engagement and communication between the PRG, QPO and all stakeholders were excellent. QPO in particular was always there when needed, but never intrusive. Library staff were dedicated and committed to the process, along with every stakeholder group the PRG met and interacted with. This level of engagement is highly commendable and PRG would like to make sure this is noted for communication to the University Librarian.

## **4 Approach to Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

- **Progress made since the last area review**

The PRG recognises that good progress has been achieved since the last Quality Review in 2015. In total, 11 recommendations were made across four broad areas, which included: developing a strategic approach to the challenge of achieving ambitions with limited resources; building the organisation and staffing fit for the future; addressing budget challenges; and maximising the library building. The PRG acknowledges that all 11 recommendations have been acted upon by the Library, and there has also been a continuing emphasis on ongoing quality assurance and enhancement of current services.

- **Strategic approach**

Given that the last Quality Review took place during an intensive period of preparing for the Incorporation, the PRG understands that the initial strategic priority for the Library after the review was to deliver nine projects set out in the Library's Policies, Procedures and Systems (PPS) Framework to ensure the establishment of efficient and enhanced multi-campus library service. The PRG also notes that each project was aligned with the broader strategic priorities of the Library in the period 2016-2019 as well as the University Strategic Plan (2017-2022). It is somewhat difficult for the PRG to ascertain definitively whether all these projects have already been completed or whether the work is still ongoing for some of them - for instance, project 3 (Storage Capacity), project 4 (Special Collections), project 5 (Research Communications), project 8 (Websites). The PRG notes that significant progress has been made in relation to two "strategic approach" recommendations made by the PRG in 2015: 1) a new Special Collections and Archives Directorate has been established, and 2) a number of strategic initiatives have been initiated and led by the Library in relation to Open Research including the establishment of DCU Press and an Open Scholarship Conference series and the creation of DCU Open Research Taskforce.

- **Organisation and Staffing**

Recommendations in the "Organisation and staffing" category were addressed by reviewing the Library's structures and staffing and developing a new organisational structure in the context of the DCU incorporation process. The major change in the Library's structure was the creation of four new Directorates and increase in staff numbers through absorption of staff from the Incorporated institutions, and also the creation of new posts including two new Associate Directors, a dedicated subject Librarian for Education, a Digitisation and Digital Humanities Librarian, and an Outreach Librarian. It is unclear what the strategic rationale for the new structure was as it was confirmed during the PRG meetings with the senior library team that there was no dedicated change management provided to the Library during the incorporation process. The role of the Research Communications Librarian has been revised, and a new Planning and Administration Unit has been established. Some progress has also been made in relation to staff development and training such as the adoption of the Library's learning and development policy and mainstreaming the task of staff training and development across all cross directorate groups. The PRG notes, however, a somewhat delayed action by the Library on this recommendation given that the Learning and Development Policy has been



adopted only in 2021 and a Library staff learning and development working group is still in the process of being set up.

- **Budget**

The last PRG report recommended that the University increased recurrent funding for the Library's information resources in line with comparator universities. The Library's information budget did increase in the academic year 2016-2017, however the PRG notes that this level of funding was not sustained and has been subsequently decreased in years 2018-2021. Worryingly, the level of funding for information resources for the 2022-2023 period is only now back to the 2016-2017 figures. Other budget-related recommendations included investment in RFID technology to improve access to books in multi-site Library after the Incorporation, and reconfiguration and development of new spaces. Notably, the Library succeeded in securing funding for a number of projects including the development of a new store in the basement of the O'Reilly's Library, the implementation of RFID technology and the establishment of new enhanced self-issue kiosks and entrance & exit gates in the O'Reilly's Library.

- **Accommodation / Library building**

The last PRG report identified two key recommendations regarding public space/staff accommodation areas and the O'Reilly Library building: 1) to prioritise a plan for sustained maintenance of the O'Reilly Library building with some maintenance issues being identified as a high priority; 2) to conduct a holistic review of the O'Reilly Building Library spaces and develop a reconfiguration plan in accordance with user needs. The PRG notes that following the quality review in 2015 a number of high-priority improvements and essential maintenance works took place in the O'Reilly Library including roof repair work, the installation of new carpet/flooring across all staff/public areas, and the replacement of the revolving door. The Library has also re-configured and repurposed a space on the ground floor of the O'Reilly Library building and a new learning and teaching space - Information Commons - was delivered in 2021. As a result of reconfiguration planning, a new library exhibition space was also developed on the ground floor. The PRG notes that work on a holistic review of library spaces was paused due to Covid and is now identified by the Library as a key priority in 2023.

- **Effectiveness of current quality assurance and enhancement processes**

Overall, there has been an increased emphasis on strategy-driven activity and ongoing quality enhancement in the Library. The development of the business plan model shows a proactive approach by the Library towards both quality assurance and strategic planning: the business plan is reviewed annually and has a dual function - to track progress and deliverables of the existing processes and projects, and to inform the wider strategic direction of the Library and to identify longer-term initiatives and priorities. The Library also appears to be actively monitoring user needs and a number of mechanisms are in place to gather qualitative and quantitative feedback from all stakeholders. The detailed assessment of the ongoing quality enhancement processes is provided in Section 5.4.

## 5 Findings of the Peer Review Group

### 5.1 Planning and Effective Management of Resources

The PRG **commends** the Library for maximising scarce resources and always ensuring high quality service to its stakeholders as well as for their effective management of limited resources and for achieving efficiencies to best manage their resources. This is particularly impressive given the very significant growth and expansion of the human and physical resources since incorporation, followed, very rapidly, by the demands and challenges of the pandemic. The PRG **commends** the Library for having successfully implemented extensive change across staff, collections, space and locations since the incorporation and for the resilience shown through this and the subsequent pandemic challenges. The PRG also **commends** the Library for the agility and flexibility they showed especially during the pandemic. The Library's continual strategic alignment with the overall DCU strategy is also very **commendable** as is the expansion of collections arising from incorporation and the acquisition of new collections.

The current Library structure is clearly set out in the SAR, however the PRG notes that the rationale for the new structure was not informed by a strategic review of the new entity arising from the incorporation but may have been a pragmatic response to the merging of three very different entities with each having its own culture and norms as well as staff contracts, grades, roles and responsibilities. The PRG notes, in particular, that there are no Professional Grade 6 (P6) roles in the library which results in the senior team having to manage many operational matters. It also notes that there seems to be confusion regarding whether the Professional 5 (P5) grade can supervise a Professional 4 (P4) and also that there is an unusual process of always replacing a P5 at a P4 level (where the P5 had been promoted from a P4). The PRG also notes that there appears to be a disparity of roles and responsibilities associated with people at the same grade. Therefore, the PRG **recommends** that the Library team, supported by HR and Change Management expertise, conducts a comprehensive review of their current structure, importantly after their strategic alignment exercise, to ensure that the structure is future-fit, strategically aligned and informed by service needs.

The SAR notes a number of concerns around the Library space management and the feedback from the 2022 LibQual+ User Survey revealed that the lack of seats was one of the primary concerns for students. Stakeholder meetings during the review also flagged issues around insufficient study space relative to a growing student population. Benchmarking data used by the sector reports the average number of students:library seats to be between 7 and 9 students for every library seat, with Irish averages at the lower end and UK averages at the higher end. The figure of 18:1 reported in the SAR is comparatively very high, therefore the Library may need to consider this as part of its wider review of spaces.

The PRG is of the view that to maximise the provision of student single and collaborative spaces and other contemporary and future focused learning facilities, the Library will need to undertake a comprehensive research and investigation into international good practice and standards in the sector. Similarly, the PRG notes that the provision of efficient, effective and appropriate staff work spaces and environments is necessary. The SAR and meetings with

stakeholders during the quality review visit also referred to logistical difficulties with deliveries, reception, processing and storage issues, all of which need to be addressed.

Overall, the PRG acknowledges that there are space utilisation challenges and that there may be more effective ways of reorganising the existing space. The PRG also notes that this is something which can, and should, be led out on by the Library itself, with the support of the Estates Department, with a view to an incremental, as opposed to 'big bang' plan. Therefore, the PRG **recommends** that the Library actively drives an incremental space plan for and with students and staff in consultation with Estates, Teaching & Learning, Research and informed by international good practice to benchmark student:seat ratios, types and purpose of different spaces etc.

## 5.2 Effectiveness of Activities and Processes

The Library activities and processes outlined in the SAR are aimed at delivering print and digital content to a staff and student body, in person, digitally and through classroom and consultation engagement. Since 2016 the challenges faced by the Library include increasing student and staff clients, diverse and growing print and digital resources delivered across a Library campus of 3 sites. The PRG **commends** the very significant student focused developments in the Library, including removal of fines and the launch of a student journal. Each library location faces specific challenges and opportunities. These developments have taken place against the integration of the extensive Milltown library collection, the impact of Covid 19 and the implementation of a new library services platform (LSP). The Library has also advanced stewardship of its special collections to include dedicated public exhibitions and research facilitation. The Library looks forward to aligning with the embedding of the DCU Futures philosophy, with appropriate resources and student learning experiences.

The PRG **commends** the Library for the impressive focus on digital transformation in its activities and processes and on the implementation of significant systems improvements through the new LSP, the Digital Content Store (DCS) platform and piloting. The Leganto Development and integration of library resources within the students virtual learning environment, including the LETS tutorial and assignment planner are also particularly **commended**. The PRG also **commends** the growing focus on furthering open research through transformative agreements, research data management supports and the DCU Press. The PRG also **acknowledges** and **commends** various efficiency-focused developments such as desk service review, revised service and staff roster hours together with the recruitment of dedicated library monitors. There may be opportunity to review processes to minimise duplication across the three sites, though this did not emerge strongly during the review visit.

The SAR provides an overview of the Library budgets in terms of pay, non-pay, information resources, with some benchmarked data across years and externally. The PRG notes that the information resources budget in particular in DCU is comparatively less than the other Irish university libraries, while also acknowledging the 11% increase in the overall budget in 2022/23 (see table below, source: SAR: p.19).

Library information resource budgets, post incorporation, have fluctuated in line with the capacity of DCU finances. The information resources budget is distributed across the purchase of print books, eBooks, single title journals, and access to eResources/databases. The Library endeavours to optimise its spend per student. However, with student numbers approaching 20,000, the Library presents a case for review of its allocation. For example, as suppliers quote based on numbers of FTEs, this increased FTE will have the effect of increasing prices of all eResource subscriptions.

Issues with ebook access were reported at stakeholder meetings with students and academic staff, which may be related to book fund budgetary constraints. The PRG is of the opinion that as the costs of digital information resources are higher than the print equivalent, it is likely that the information resources budget will need review if it is to adequately cater for digital teaching and learning at DCU.

#### **Spend per student, 2022 (€000)**

<b>2022</b>	<b>UG</b>	<b>UCD</b>	<b>UL</b>	<b>TUD</b>	<b>DCU</b>	<b>MU</b>
Info Resources	€1,737	€2,568	€1,500	€2,333	€1,270	€901
Student total	16,000	27,500	16,500	28,500	16,600	13,700
<b>€ per student</b>	<b>€109</b>	<b>€93</b>	<b>€90</b>	<b>€81</b>	<b>€76</b>	<b>€66</b>

The PRG acknowledges the library's endeavours to maximise the return on resource spending via consortia, a new Resource Allocation Model (RAM), the introduction of Leganto, a reading list book purchase policy together with various purchase models to provide access to ebook content; single title purchase, annual subscription to aggregator/publisher packages, or Evidence Based Selection to Publisher content. As a response to ongoing issues with access to etextbooks, the Library provides licensed access to key reading list chapters through the DCS platform. Staff planning processes are flagged in the SAR under section 5.2.5 and the PRG agreed with much of the assessment that a review of structures was necessary. This is covered in sections 5.1 and 5.4 of the PRG report.

The Library proposes the drafting of a Collections Development policy to further prioritise and direct their purchasing selections and processes in light of the strategic focus of DCU and the library's ambition to be at the heart of the university and lead strategic initiatives. The PRG welcomes this proposal which would also be an important component of its overall strategic plan and would allow the Library to address the PRG's **recommendation** to develop a forward thinking Library strategy in alignment with the University strategy and the changing external

environment. Specifically, the PRG **recommends** that the Library accelerates the delivery of the Collection Development Policy and the Special Collections Development policy.

- **Strategic partners within DCU – Support services**

The PRG notes that the Library values a number of key partnerships within DCU critical to the quality of student and staff experiences.

#### *Information Systems and Services (ISS)*

ISS is vital to the overall technical infrastructure and IT network of the University. There is an ISS Helpdesk on site in the Library (as well as in the ISS building itself). Project structures are created for specific projects, for example, recent developments include ongoing and planned research data management services and supports.

#### *Finance*

An annual budgeting operates to a defined process, augmented by standalone business case proposal engagements. The annual budgeting process presents challenges to longer term and strategic planning as well as sustainability of quality services, but the PRG acknowledges that the University itself is funded annually. The PRG notes that some frustration exists amongst the library team regarding decisions on annual allocations, for which they often get no explanation. The PRG, therefore, **recommends** that an annual pre-budget submission dialogue to discuss Library's annual budget and, specifically, information resourcing budget, be established between the University Librarian and the Director of Finance.

#### *Human Resources*

This is a critical relationship for workforce planning, staff recruitment and for staff training and development. Active and regular engagement with the relevant HR Business Partner is key to maximising this relationship. Section 5.1 outlined the significant requirements and the relevant **recommendation** regarding a review structure, staffing, grades and roles and responsibility to enable the realisation of strategic planning objectives and the HR Department will be central to the success of this process.

#### *Estates Department*

This department plays an important role in providing ongoing maintenance of buildings, facilities management, new and refurbishment project support and security services. These areas require regular interfaces at senior and junior levels to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for staff and students especially in areas of high footfall. It is noted that the Library experiences delays in having some routine maintenance issues addressed, but it is unclear what the reason for these delays is, although current issues with the Estates Department Help Desk system may be a contributing factor. Meetings with stakeholders during the quality review visit revealed that maintenance and infrastructural issues and their timely resolution exercised many staff and students. Particular concerns were raised in relation to restrooms and to the functioning of digital access points. There is also ambiguity about internal reporting and escalation processes, and therefore, in light of all these observations, the PRG

**recommends** that the Library establishes a clear internal escalation process to ensure timely resolution and communication of building and maintenance issues.

### 5.3 Communication and Provision of Information

The SAR outlines an internal library communication structure supported by cross-functional teams and project groups with opportunities for bi-annual meetings and other occasional gatherings. Also referenced is a dedicated intranet for staff information which is currently under review to address timely staff procedures. The PRG **commends** the time and attention given to the structuring of a communication process across the Library on the three campuses. These communication structures are working relatively well in some areas, but are somewhat uneven. Some areas meet regularly, while others rarely meet and some staff cited that communication was better when they had the opportunity to be co-located with their colleagues. Overall, the communication structures appear to favour top-down channels of communication. The SWOC analysis, undertaken by the Library staff, confirmed this perception while also acknowledging some benefits of the current structures. The convening of a Learning and Development Working Group is welcomed. Learnings from the recent SLA group's outcomes and experiences may inform improvements in information flow within and across the Library's directorates and sites. The PRG is of the opinion that the distributed library campus will benefit from all engagement opportunities to foster a one-team culture across all library sites. The PRG, therefore, **recommends** that the Library conducts a review of internal communication procedures to ensure consistency in communication across Library Directorates.

The SAR records many examples of the Library's formal representation at the senior level on a number of University Committees, evidencing the connectedness of the Library to the University. Associate Directors and Subject Librarians are represented at other Committees consistent with their respective roles.

The challenges to improve the efficacy of institutional management communications between all levels (top-down and bottom-up) in relation to key areas of the Library's planning and operations across three campuses were also recognised. The PGR noted that feedback between the Library and other departments and units in the University was more informational and operational rather than strategically driven. The PRG encourages the University Librarian and their management team to embrace the opportunities afforded to them to share their expertise and drive strategic initiatives within all senior university forums.

The PRG **commends** the cultural engagement of the Library with the local communities across the campuses with the special mention for Culture Night celebrations and **commends** the Library for its successful social media engagement with the communities. The importance of enhancing the visibility of the Library's initiatives and achievements was also noted.

The SAR reported an increase in the demand for support services for postgraduate students in areas such as digital and information literacy and Research Data Management support. Postgraduate research students can register throughout the year, giving the Library an opportunity to provide online orientation resources year-round. In light of these observations, the PRG **recommends** that the Library strengthen the provision and promotion of an online

orientation resource tailored to postgraduate research students reflecting ongoing registration throughout the year.

The PRG also recognises the need for close collaboration between the Library and the Head of Digital Communications to explore different models - including outsourcing - to address the Library's website issues and limitations (including, user interface design as well as visibility, provision, navigability, and accessibility of information and resources, and provision of information on the Library's services and resources). The PRG **recommends** that the Library address these issues with the Library website, in partnership with the Head of Digital Communications and explore different models to address these issues, including outsourcing.

#### 5.4 Ongoing Quality Enhancement

The SAR notes the expansion of staff numbers and changing directorates which came about following Incorporation and describes the 'One Library' programme which was put in place to address staff development and communication challenges. The PRG **commends** the Library for the commitment to ongoing quality, evidenced by the awards and recognitions outlined in the SAR, which demonstrate an admirable enthusiasm for quality improvement in the library team, as do specific initiatives praised repeatedly during the PRG review visit such as the Loop Assignment Planner, autism-friendly library space, Go Open project and undergraduate journal.

The PRG notes a clear commitment to providing staff with a range of development opportunities, described in the DCU Library Staff Learning and Development Policy. However, the SAR highlighted a drop in expenditure on staff training, development and travel over a number of years, though the reason for this is unclear and may be related to COVID pandemic.

PRG meetings with staff indicated that the recommendation from the last Quality Review to embed a sustained and creative approach to staff development and training is an ongoing challenge and priority. It was noted that the Performance Review and Development (PRD) process was piloted in the Library but does not appear to have become embedded in staff management processes. Inconsistent communications and varying approaches to staff development are very common in all libraries and other workplaces, and can be helped by quality enhancements that utilise wider policies, supports and frameworks supported by HR. The DCU Professional Development Framework and PRD processes present opportunities to provide the Library staff with a more structured approach to their development and, when applied consistently, would be a significant quality enhancement. The PRG, therefore, **recommends** that the Library fully utilise the DCU Professional Development Framework and the PRD process to maximise staff development opportunities.

Also related to quality enhancement, the Library has good, regular mechanisms to get feedback from library users and act upon this feedback to improve services. This is supported by running the Library survey on a bi-annual basis, meeting Student Union officers regularly and liaising with academic staff for their feedback. The culture of continuous improvement is supported through the annual library business plan and came through clearly in the SAR and in meetings with the stakeholders during the PRG visit.

User feedback is a very important quality activity which goes hand in hand with an evidence-based approach to decision-making that is informed by data. While the SAR included many data points relating to staffing and budgets, there does not appear to be a set of agreed key performance indicators for the library to measure itself against. The PRG felt that DCU Library may benefit from reporting into the SCONUL Annual Statistics, which would facilitate benchmarking against the other university libraries in Ireland and the UK, as well as against sectoral averages. In this regard, the PRG **recommends** that the Library develop a set of KPIs and consider contributing to SCONUL to enable external benchmarking

## 5.5 External Perspectives

The PRG **commends** the Library with regard to how it is viewed by its stakeholders, notably that it powers, and is the heart of, the University. In particular, staff working in the Library, their commitment and positive can-do approach, and the cultural offer were all highlighted as significant strengths of the Library, evidenced through glowing remarks by the student and the academic community. The students regard the Library as a safe space, where they can be themselves. They appreciate the mix of spaces, the opening hours, cheap printing, removal of fines, and having access to both physical and digital resources. Notably, the students would like the Library to be more visible to them, provide more support for publishing, and provide more individual desk spaces, collaborative learning spaces, and power sockets. The academics highly regard the Library as a key academic support unit for them and are proud of the services that the Library offers. They recognised the evolution of the Library and the significant improvements they have seen, including the role of the Library in the University's cultural offer. Examples of support provided included book club launches, open access support, and subject area contact points. The PRG **commends** the provision of a great cultural and special collections offer for the University and its communities.

The students and staff recognised the lack of access to resources in supporting ebook licensing and in some areas of primary research such as access to non-English language collections and incomplete cataloguing of the available collections in Irish language. The PRG **recommends** that the Library leverage existing links and partnerships, for example with the European Consortium of Innovative Universities (ECIU) and other networks to enhance the available Library's resources for students and staff, to provide economies of scale, and to build on its existing reputation.

The PRG noted that the Library is still seen as, primarily, a service provider, and there is significant potential to reposition the Library as a partner in research, teaching, learning and community engagement activities. The PRG also noted a continuous improvement in the LibQual+ survey results and the links identified with international fora such as IATUL and IFLA.

There was a general acknowledgement across all external stakeholders that after a significant amount of institutional change (through incorporation, pandemic, and key senior staff changes), now is the time for the Library to reinvigorate strategic relationships across the University. In addition, the Library's potential to leverage existing networks further was identified, particularly in relation to stakeholder management with content providers, suppliers, publishers and appropriate organisations, including national and sectoral consortia. The PRG notes that the Library is seen as giving more central and strategic leadership than perhaps the



Library itself realises, and **recommends** that the Library reinvigorate key relationships with other partners in the University as part of the Library strategy development, in particular with the leadership of HR, Finance, and Estates.

## 6 SWOC Analysis and Plans for Improvement

### 6.1 SWOC Analysis for Library

The self-assessment report for the Library included a proposed summary SWOC analysis of the Library. As the SAR contained a SWOC analysis rather than a SWOT analysis, the PRG has similarly changed this from a SWOT to a SWOC analysis. As a result of the Peer Review Group's analysis of the self-assessment report, the supporting documentation and the findings obtained during the peer review visit, the PRG proposes the following to be more reflective:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Highly committed staff and service culture with commitment and expertise</li> <li>● Resilient, adaptable, risk taking, outward looking</li> <li>● Well connected, customer focused</li> <li>● Commitment to community engagement</li> <li>● Impactful buildings on three campuses</li> <li>● Strong trusted library brand</li> <li>● Cultural brand</li> <li>● Library as a safe, trusted space</li> <li>● High satisfaction levels among students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pace and scale of growth impact on processes, activities, and communications</li> <li>● Reactive focus</li> <li>● Budget allocation model (particularly information resources budget)</li> <li>● Staff office space</li> <li>● Internal communications (particularly closing the feedback loop)</li> <li>● Current structure</li> <li>● Provision and accessibility of resources and information on website</li> <li>● Efficacy of external communications (particularly with HR, Estates, Communications, and Finance etc.)</li> <li>● Professional modesty</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Deep and rich collections</li> <li>● Staff development and knowledge sharing</li> <li>● Library as a leader and driver of key strategic initiatives such as Open Research</li> <li>● Library as a partner in key research, teaching, and learning initiatives</li> <li>● Collection review and policy development</li> <li>● Incremental space development plan</li> <li>● New ways of working</li> <li>● Acknowledging achievements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Changing expectations of students and staff</li> <li>● Implications of hybrid environment</li> <li>● Lack of library visibility</li> <li>● Cybersecurity</li> <li>● Ambition, innovation and scale</li> <li>● Cost of living crisis</li> <li>● Limited Resources</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesigned structure to optimise strategic and operational delivery</li> </ul>	
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## 6.2 Plans for Improvement Identified by Library

Overall, the PRG supports the areas identified for improvement, albeit with some difference in how these should be addressed.

Each area identified by the Library in their SAR is discussed below:

1. *Resources*. The PRG acknowledges that resources are a challenge for the Library but also for the University as a whole. Given this fact, it is imperative that the Library is involved in the annual budget process, so that it can (i) understand the constraints and (ii) participate in decisions being made about competing funding challenges within the library resources. While acknowledging the importance of multi-annual funding, the PRG notes that the University itself is funded only on an annual basis.
2. *Structure*: The PRG endorses the need to review the structure and recommends that this should be a comprehensive review encompassing roles and responsibilities, grades, career and professional development planning, underpinned by Change Management support and the use of the PRD and the Professional Development Framework processes. The PRG also supports the improvement of internal communications by aiming to achieve consistency across the directorates and sites.
3. *Line Management and Reporting*: The PRG acknowledges that this area needs attention and that this should be incorporated into the comprehensive review outlined in (2) above.
4. *Space Review*: The PRG notes that there is significant scope for space review and re-utilisation and recommends that the Library leads out on this, proactively engaging with the Estates Department to source the additional expertise required (architects, designers etc.).
5. *Website*: The PRG agrees that the website requires attention to make the portal more usable and intuitive. Again, the PRG recommends that the Library engages proactively with the Communications and Marketing Department. to acquire the relevant expertise required, including outsourcing if this is appropriate.

- **Gaps**

The main gap identified during the PRG visit is that between how the Library itself views its position in the University and how they are viewed by their stakeholders. The Library appears to position itself primarily as a high quality service provider and, indeed, this was fully endorsed throughout the PRG visit. However, the PRG also notes that the Library is seen as a source of leadership in innovation across numerous areas of the University and the PRG endorses this and recommends that they actively pursue this position.

## 7 Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

No	Commendation	P	Level	
<b>Planning and Effective Management of Resources</b>				
	Commendation			Successful change management (staff, collections, space growth) since incorporation from an operational perspective.
	Commendation			Resilience shown during the tremendous amount of changes over the past years.
	Commendation			Agility and flexibility shown in responding to changes.
	Commendation			Effective management and efficiency generation given limitation of resources.
	Commendation			Alignment of library strategy with institutional strategy through a period of evolution.
	Commendation			Expansion and promotion of collections through incorporation of libraries and acquisitions.
<b>Effectiveness of Activities and Processes</b>				
	Commendation			Implementation of significant systems improvements through the new LSP, the DCS Store and piloting Leganto.
	Commendation			Development and integration of library resources within the student virtual learning environment (LETS, assignment planner).
	Commendation			Student focused developments including removal of fines, student journal, and other initiatives.
	Commendation			Growing focus on furthering open research through transformative agreements, research data management support, and the DCU Press.
<b>Communication and Provision of Information</b>				
	Commendation			The time and attention given to structuring a communications process across the library on three campuses.
	Commendation			The successful efforts on social media engagement evidenced by the SAR.
<b>Ongoing Quality Enhancement</b>				
	Commendation			Ongoing quality enhancement efforts, evidenced by the awards and recognitions, and specific initiatives (Loop Assignment Planner, autism-friendly library space, Go Open project and undergraduate journal)
<b>Stakeholder Relationships</b>				
	Commendation			Provision of a great cultural and special collections offer for the University and its communities.
	Commendation			Excellent work and engagement on SAR.

No	Recommendation	P	Level	
<b>Planning and Effective Management of Resources</b>				
1	Recommendation	P1	A	Develop a forward thinking Library strategy in alignment with the University strategy and the changing external environment.
2	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Conduct the strategic review of the Library to ensure appropriate structure and staffing in partnership with HR.
3	Recommendation	P2	A	Actively drive an incremental space plan for and with students and staff in consultation with Estates, T&L, Research, and informed by international good practice.
<b>Effectiveness of Activities and Processes</b>				
4	Recommendation	P1	A	Accelerate the delivery of the Collection Development Policy and the Special Collections Development policy.
5	Recommendation	P1	A	Establish a clear internal escalation process to ensure timely resolution and communication of building and maintenance issues.
6	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Establish an annual pre-budget submission dialogue to discuss Library's information resourcing budget with the Director of Finance.
<b>Communication and Provision of Information</b>				
7	Recommendation	P2	A/U	Address the issues with the Library website (including the provision and accessibility of information on the Library's services and resources) in partnership with the Head of Digital Communications. Explore different models to address these issues including outsourcing.
8	Recommendation	P3	A	Strengthen provision and promotion of an online orientation resource tailored to postgraduate research students reflecting ongoing registration throughout the year.
9	Recommendation	P2	A	Review internal communication procedures to ensure consistency in communication across Library directorates.
<b>Ongoing Quality Enhancement</b>				
10	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Fully utilise the professional development framework and PRD process to maximise staff development opportunities.
11	Recommendation	P2	A	Develop a set of KPIs and consider contributing to SCONUL to enable external benchmarking.
<b>Stakeholder Relationships</b>				
12	Recommendation	P1	A/U	Reinvigorate key relationships with other partners in the University as part of library strategy development, in particular with the leadership of HR, Finance, and Estates.

13	Recommendation	P2	A	Leverage the existing links with ECIU and other networks to enhance the available Library's resources for students and staff.
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## Appendix:

### Draft Timetable Peer Review Group Visit Library

DATE: 22nd - 24th Feb 2023

Time	Peer Review Group (PRG) Activity/Meeting	Venue	Notes
<b>Day 1- Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February - St Patrick's Campus, Drumcondra</b>			
1000 1130	Briefing by Director of Quality Promotion; guidelines provided to assist the PRG during the visit and in developing its report	C204 (Belvedere House) Baseroom	Aisling McKenna
1130 1230	PRG Private Meeting Time. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRG Selects a Chair</li> <li>PRG discusses key themes and areas for exploration based on the SAR</li> <li>PRG assigns tasks and responsibilities among members</li> </ul>	C204 (Belvedere House)	PRG
1230 1330	Lunch with the Director of QPO (Light lunch)	Belvedere House (Library area)	Aisling & PRG
1330 1445	Consideration of the SAR: Shall commence with a short presentation by University Librarian (John McDonough) followed by discussion (Director, QPO to attend) Consideration of the SAR with the Area Head and members of the Quality Review committee : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>John McDonough (Chair), University Librarian</li> <li>Ronan Cox, Digital Services Librarian</li> <li>Carol Kinsella, Library Attendant</li> <li>Victoria Smyth, Collections Librarian</li> <li>Samantha Groves, Planning &amp; Administration Librarian</li> <li>Marie Doyle, Planning &amp; Administration Senior Library Assistant</li> <li>Amanda Halpin, Periodical Librarian</li> <li>Darragh Wilson, Periodicals Library Assistant</li> <li>Shauna McDermott, Public Service Manager</li> </ul>	C205 (Belvedere House)	Members of the Library Quality Group



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aoife Murphy, Public Services &amp; Outreach, Senior Library Library Assistant</li> <li>• Ellen Breen, Research &amp; Teaching Associate Director</li> <li>• Orla Nic Aodha, Public Services &amp; Outreach Associate Director</li> <li>• Cliona Ni Liathain, Buildings Library Assistant</li> <li>• Liam O'Dwyer, Assistant Librarian, Digitisation and Digital Humanities, Special Collections &amp; Archives Directorate</li> </ul>		
1445 1500	PRG private discussion time – Coffee Break	C204 (Belvedere House)	
1500 1600	Library Staff - Meeting 1 - Names TBC	C205 (Belvedere House)	
16.00 1700	Campus Tour Cregan & Woodlock John McDonough University Librarian & Orla Nic Aodha, Public Services & Outreach Associate Director		
1700 1730	PRG private discussion time	C204 (Belvedere House)	PRG
19.00 21.00	PRG Private Dinner and discussion	Crowne Plaza Hotel	PRG
<b>Day 2- Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February - Glasnevin Campus, Collins Ave</b>			
0900 0945	Library Staff- Meeting 2 – Names TBC	Information Commons, Library (Baseroom)	.
0945 1030	Library Staff Meeting 3 - Key staff from university department to discuss key projects and activities – <b>Projects / Collections/ Library Resources</b>	Information Commons, Library	
1030 1100	PRG Coffee/ Private Meeting Time	Information commons, Library	
1100 1145	Student Meeting Names TBC, Mix of Under & Post Grad Students	Information Commons, Library	
1145	Key staff from other university department <b>Academic Staff</b>	Information	

1230	where the area under review has significant co-operation from (faculty-based/ prof support) - Names TBC	Commons , Library	
1230 1300	Tour of O'Reilly Library		
1300 1400	Lunch/ PRG Private Meeting Time	Information Commons , Library	
1400 1445	Key staff from other university departments – <b>Professional Support</b> staff where the area under review has significant co-operation from professional and admin support staff - Names TBC	Information Commons , Library	
1445 1515	Staff Open Forum for any member of Area staff	Information Commons , Library	
1515 1615	PRG Private Meeting Time / Coffee Break	Information Commons , Library	
1615 1715	Meeting with Area <b>Senior Management Team</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John McDonough, University Librarian</li> <li>• Ellen Breen, Associate Director, Research &amp; Teaching</li> <li>• Orla NicAodha. Associate Director, Public Services &amp; Outreach</li> <li>• David Meehan, Associate Director, Special Collections &amp; Archives</li> <li>• Mary Kiely, Associate Director, Collections &amp; Digital Services</li> </ul>	Information Commons , Library	
1715 1745	Meeting with <b>Area Head</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John McDonough</li> </ul>	Information Commons , Library	
1900 2100	PRG Private Dinner and Meeting	Crowne Plaza Hotel	PRG
<b>Day 3 – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February - Glasnevin Campus, Collins Ave</b>			
0900 1000	PRG Meeting with DCU <b>Senior Management Group</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof. Daire Keogh, President</li> </ul>	AG01, Albert College	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Gareth Yore, HR Director</li> <li>• Mr. John Kilcoyne, Finance Director</li> <li>• Dr. Declan Raftery, Chief Operations Officer</li> <li>• Prof. Derek Hand Executive Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences</li> <li>• Prof. Michelle Butler, Executive Dean, Faculty of Science and Health</li> <li>• Prof. John Doyle, Vice-President for Research</li> <li>• Ms. Laura.Mahoney, Executive Director of Engagement</li> <li>• Ms Celine Crawford, Director of Communications and Marketing</li> </ul>		
1000 1030	Meeting with DCU President, Prof. Daire Keogh	AG01	
10.30 13.00	PRG Private Meeting Time- final discussion on recommendations	Information Commons, Library	
1300 1345	PRG working lunch and finalization of exit presentation	Information Commons, Library	
1345 1400	Briefing with John McDonough and the Director of QPO on key recommendations	Information Commons, Library	
1400 1430	PRG Exit Presentation	Mentoring Suite, Library	