

INSPIRE (Information Sharing Partners In Resources for Education) announces an access and referral policy for Libraries in Higher Education, Public and National Library Services

The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), the Society of Chief Librarians for public library authorities in England and Wales (SCL) and the British Library has established a taskforce to develop ways to improve access and referral between higher education, public and national library services.

This policy has the approval of the BL Management Board (9/01), an EGM of SCONUL (11/01) and the SCL AGM (5/02). It seeks to engage library service colleagues in all sectors in the formulation and development of access and referral schemes at local, regional and national levels. A set of guiding principles has been agreed as a framework to develop access and referral schemes:

Guiding Principles

- All participants using the framework reaffirm their responsibility for providing the basic information needs of their users
- The framework is founded on the assumption of mutual benefit
- The process is based on 'managed referral' between organisations, authorities and institutions, users being authenticated by the home service provider
- A phased approach is assumed, building from access to collections, potentially and where appropriate, to borrowing rights on an incremental basis
- Reference access is free, with additional services potentially carrying a charge

In drawing up these principles the task force recognises three key factors:

- Each public and higher education library service has an identified governing body and core customer base to whom they are primarily responsible
- There is a considerable body of evidence about access and referral schemes already in existence across many areas of the country.
- This policy is intended to complement existing access and referral schemes for taught course students

Policy statement

Higher education, public and national library services are committed to working together to improve access to the wealth of material for which they are responsible.

Programmes of cooperation will be developed at local, regional and national level to ensure access for those with bona fide learning needs.

Access other than to public libraries is a conditional privilege and not a right

Each participating library has the primary purpose of meeting the objectives of its parent organisation and must work within the policy framework of that organisation.

Issued by the joint BL/SCL/SCONUL Access Referral Taskforce