

**Independent Evaluation of the Higher Education Academy  
Response from the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals**

**October 2013**

**Introduction**

The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP) welcomes the opportunity to participate in this independent evaluation of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). CILIP is established by Royal Charter and is the professional body for library and information professionals in the UK. It has around 14,000 members working in all parts of the UK economy, including academic and research libraries.

Members in the HE sector were invited to answer this questionnaire and our comments below reflect the responses we received<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this we have identified ways that CILIP could potentially partner with HEA, as the evidence we have quickly mustered indicates that the HEA is a valued presence within the HE library community, providing recognition of the teaching roles and skills of many librarians. CILIP sees possibilities for cooperating in research and looking at joint accreditation of teaching skills of library staff. These are ideas that we will pursue separately to this response.

**A. Your organisation's relationship with HEA**

**• How important is HEA to your organisation, and why?**

Libraries and information services are an integral part of teaching and learning within higher education institutions and have a significant impact on the quality of the learning environment and learning outcomes. Academic librarians deliver services to support a variety of learning styles and activities, course delivery methods and attendance patterns thereby ensuring access to the UK and international knowledge base. As well as supporting teachers in the development of students as independent learners by incorporating information and digital literacies into the curriculum, many library and information professionals teach information skills, thereby making an invaluable contribution to the development of a workforce and citizenry that has the skills to think critically, learn, innovate and exploit new opportunities. The HEA has been a useful and valued source of support (especially financial) and professional guidance to many university libraries when they are planning, developing and evaluating some of these services and, through the HEA recognition service and the National Teaching Fellowship, has been especially important and valuable to institutions wishing to develop their librarians as teachers (see below).

*HEA recognition service and the National Teaching Fellowship*

The HEA's recognition service and the National Teaching Fellowship are important to academic librarians who teach. A number of CILIP members have achieved professional recognition for their teaching

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<sup>1</sup> Submissions were received from CILIP's Information Literacy Group and Academic and Research Libraries Group.

practice and some have been awarded the National Teaching Fellowship. As well as benefiting their personal and professional development, such recognition raises awareness of the teaching capabilities of librarians, which in turn enhances their profile with academic colleagues, many of whom are unaware of the level of teaching undertaken by library staff.

- **How would you characterise the relationship and why?**

The academic librarians who responded to this questionnaire described the relationship between their institutions and the HEA as symbiotic. The dialogue between academics, educational support staff, including librarians, and the Academy is beneficial to all.

- **How well is HEA meeting your current organisational needs? Is there anything else HEA should do to improve on this?**

As stated above, the HEA is successfully supporting the professional development of librarians who teach. Other organisational needs are being met through the commissioning of research and the funding of projects to improve the student experience. Such projects can provide useful scope for partner working between academic libraries and the HEA, especially when it is in an area of direct relevance to libraries, such as digital literacy. However one respondent noted that the timescale allowed to prepare a bid for project funding is sometimes too short given the time needed to formulate ideas with academic colleagues.

Recent conferences on emerging issues such as mobile learning have been very informative and useful for academic librarians and their institutions.

- **What would be the key priority you see for HEA in its work to support / complement your relationship?**

Many academic librarians are teaching the essential information literacy skills that students need to develop as confident, independent learners who will succeed in their chosen course of study and be prepared for the information and knowledge based workplace that follows<sup>2</sup>. As a key public good of the profession, information literacy is a top CILIP priority, so HEA's continued support for the development of these teachers is key.

It is also important that HEA continues to be inclusive and see library and information professionals as worthwhile and valuable project participants. Greater interaction with librarians at events such as Umbrella, CILIP's biennial conference, the annual conference of CILIP's Academic & Research Libraries Group or LILAC, the Information Literacy Group's annual conference, could help in this regard.

## **B. Strategic role and contribution of the HEA in the sector**

- **What are your perceptions (and why) of the level of clarity on what the HEA is seeking to do, and how it is doing it?**

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<sup>2</sup> CILIP defines Information Literacy as "knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner"

Responding members had a clear understanding of the aims of the HEA. There is a wealth of information on the HEA's website to explain how the Academy supports the development of good practice, along with resources to support its adoption and dissemination. The annual conference and programme of events and seminars also aid clarity.

- **What are your perceptions of the respective levels of impact that the HEA has had in the period under review (2010 to 2013) on developments to learning and teaching through the activities within its strategic priorities (see above) and with the following stakeholder groups:**

- ***Individual practitioners and teachers (including Fellows of the HEA)***

As stated above, many HE librarians involved in teaching information literacy skills have taken part in HEA accredited programmes of professional development during the period under review and have gained much valued acknowledgment and qualifications. Several librarians have also been awarded the National Teaching Fellowship. This contribution to the professionalisation of librarians who teach has had a positive impact on the development of teaching and learning in HE.

- ***Institutions (including: heads of institutions; those responsible for learning and teaching and student experience strategy; those directly involved in supporting activities to develop institutional approaches to enhancement of learning and teaching)***

HEA funding has allowed many librarians to undertake valuable project work both within and beyond their institutions, working with other HE librarians across the UK to explore emerging issues in HE and to develop and share good practice in teaching and learning.

- ***Those responsible for sector policy on learning and teaching enhancement***

No comment

- ***Subject and discipline specialists***

No comment

- ***Educational developers***

No comment

- **How would you describe HEA (both positively and negatively)?**

The HEA keeps the education conversation going, encouraging innovation and enquiry. It also acts as a support to those wanting to develop professionally.

- **What are your perceptions of the 'additionality' of the HEA's impact upon the sector – i.e. what could not have been substantively achieved without the existence of the HEA? What evidence would you cite in respect of your observations?**

The HEA grant scheme encourages innovation and experimentation in teaching practice which otherwise may not have happened. For example, the introduction and evaluation of a new technology within a teaching programme.

The recognising and rewarding of excellent HE-level teaching according to a national framework is also an important mark of additionality that has been achieved by the HEA.

- **How effective has the HEA been in seeking to understand and then address the needs of different types of institutions and different areas of the HE learning and teaching sector in the UK? What evidence would you cite in respect of your observations?**

We are aware of some of our members receiving occasional surveys, so consultation has taken place. We are unable to comment on this in detail however.

- **Are there any forthcoming changes, opportunities or challenges in the broader landscape, which may impact on HEA and what it offers?**

It was felt that the rise in tuition fees and increased competition in HE gives the HEA a clearer mandate to help Higher Education Institutions to roll out good practice to improve student feedback and research outputs.

A more specific example of an opportunity and a challenge is in the area of MOOCs (Massive, Open Online Courses). Much pedagogical research into online learning already exists. The challenge for HEA is to make the focus of MOOC development good pedagogy rather than student recruitment. There are obvious opportunities in terms of facilitating networking and sharing of best practice. The library sector will want to promote digital literacies and academic integrity to potential MOOC and online learning developers, including copyright compliance issues in teaching, and the HEA could support the sector in this.

### **C. This review**

- **What would you like to see coming out of this review?**

One conclusion we draw from responding to this consultation is that it would be worthwhile for CILIP to explore more fully possible areas of joint working with HEA. We know a number of our members have personally benefited from their engagement with the Academy.

Like HEA, CILIP builds up the professionalism of its members by supporting the development of skills, knowledge and excellence. Given the centrality of information literacy teaching skills in the work of many HE librarians, and the priority given to information literacy by CILIP, we would welcome the opportunity to explore avenues for partnering with HEA in the accreditation of these skills.

CILIP would also welcome the opportunity to help the HEA to identify key HE library trends and to co-operate in the shaping of funding calls so that librarians can continue to undertake research to inform the development of effective and innovative library and information services that have a positive impact on student experience. Such research is essential, so we would also welcome an opportunity to explore the possibility of undertaking research with HEA to mutual advantage.

The publication of an overview of the major library related achievements of the HEA since its inception in 2004 would be very helpful.

Higher Education in Further Education is an important issue for CILIP's Academic and Research Libraries Group. This could be a future focus for joint discussion and professional networking.

**D. AOB**

- Any other relevant topics not otherwise covered above.

No comment