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Project 1: Off campus services benchmarking project 2001/02

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**Project 1**  
**Off Campus Services**  
**Benchmarking Project 2001/02**

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Our thanks are also due to all those library staff who participated in the project in various capacities.

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## Introduction

### Aims and objectives

This project aimed to investigate and compare provision of Off Campus services for students between the four participating universities.

Specifically the objectives were

1. To identify the various Off Campus services provided at each institution
2. To distinguish between services available remotely to all library users, and those targeted at selected groups
3. To measure usage of agreed Off Campus services
4. To identify methods of measuring usage of agreed electronic resources
5. To evaluate the ease of access to agreed Off Campus services
6. To identify the costs of providing agreed Off Campus services, including consideration of charging mechanisms
7. To identify any problems experienced by library staff with delivery of Off Campus services
8. To consider current publicity and promotion of Off Campus services

### Methodology

Given the diverse nature of this project it was not feasible to produce a single model of best practice. Our focus was rather to gather management information and to share experiences of this developing area of service provision.

A range of data was collected and analysed:

- Environmental data from institutions on all services currently provided which could be deemed 'Off Campus'

- Usage statistics of postal loan services September – December 2001
- Costs (where available) of providing postal loan services
- Usage statistics of electronic resources

In addition:

- A mystery shopper exercise was undertaken to assess ease of access to web-based information.
- Feedback from front-line library staff was considered.
- Examples of publicity materials were evaluated.

For the purposes of anonymity, the four institutions here are referred to as Ashton, Burton, Carlton and Denton Universities.

### Key areas

The report focuses on the four main areas covered by the project

- Mapping of Off Campus services
- Usage of postal loan services
- Mystery shopper exercise to assess ease of access to web-based information
- Usage statistics of electronic resources

## Mapping of Off Campus Services

To establish the range of Off Campus services provided by each institution, a pro forma (Appendix 1.1, page 21) was completed. This served to identify services available according to user category.

- Access to a website and web opac was available to all users at all four institutions.
- Access to a CD-Rom network, digitised course resources (e.g. electronic exam papers, HERON readings) and internet databases was provided to most users (franchise and some overseas students being the exception).
- Provision of an email account was available to most users at three of the four institutions; at the fourth only staff and special needs students were afforded this service.
- Only one institution had a dedicated phone line for Off Campus services.
- Two institutions offered an electronic enquiry desk service.
- All institutions were members of UK Libraries Plus, and most also operated local co-operative schemes.
- All institutions provided web access to study skills materials to registered users .
- All institutions offered a postal loans service to some categories of user.

## Usage of Postal Loan Services

The environmental data collected in the first phase of the project allowed us to distinguish between specific Off Campus services which were offered to particular user groups (e.g. postal loans) and those services available to all users (e.g. online catalogue).

A postal loans service was common to all four institutions, though each service differed in its operation. Nonetheless we felt a comparison would provide useful data and the opportunities to learn from each other in terms of good practice.

### Methodology

Data on the usage of the postal loans service were collected for the Autumn Term 2001, from 17 September to 21 December. In addition, approximate costs of providing the service were calculated, though in the event these proved problematic given that costs tended to be subsumed into the general library budget. The results are tabulated in Table 1a

Originally we had hoped to be able to calculate the percentage take up of the service per institution, based on number of users as a proportion of the total eligible. However due to the difficulty of estimating the numbers eligible we were obliged to abandon this objective.

## Results

**Table 1a Postal loan services. Usage statistics and service costs 17.09.01 – 21.12.01**

University	Description of service	Eligible to use the service	Number using the service	Number of book requests	Number of other requests	Service costs (including staffing)	Enquiries
Ashton	Postal loan service commenced Sept 2001. Registration fee £5.00 (contributes towards postal loan costs). Students pay £1.50 per photocopied article, £4 per postal book loan, plus return postage	All part-time students including 150 distance learners (approx. 6,500 in all)	21	2	72 journals	£3.56 per photocopy journal from stock £8.02 per photocopy via Inter Library Loan £6.41 per book	Not recorded separately to main library enquiries
Burton	Off Campus service pilot commenced Sept 2001. Registration (free) required. Return postage paid by student	All students and staff who are unable to physically access the library. Main criterion is distance from campus	86 registered 5 actual users	3 requests for a total of 7 books	2 requests for photocopies (22 pages, 13 using ILL and 9 from own stock)	Non staffing costs of £60.80. Project staff time has been costed at £20,000 per annum	Not recorded separately
Carlton	Pilot commenced in 2000/2001 but development delayed due to staff illness. Return postage paid by student	Distance Learners within the School of Health and Community Studies	63 registered (i.e. all eligible students)	2 requests for a total of 3 books <sup>(1)</sup>	47 photo-copies of journals (24 in stock and 23 ILL)	£20,500 annual staff costs. Postage per book £2.80. Photocopies 5p per page	26
Denton	Commenced 1999. Off Campus learning support services provides enquiry service during office hours, via post, phone, fax or email. No charge for posting books out, but students pay return postage. Up to 5 journal article photocopies free of charge; thereafter £4 each	Students on courses where attendance on campus is 3 times a semester or less (41 courses, approx. 1,750 students). All registered research students on non-taught courses not living locally	44	32 requests for a total of 113 books	5 requests for photo-copies (20 articles, 2 in stock and 18 ILL)	£2.80 to post a book. Use existing team therefore no additional staffing costs	53

<sup>(1)</sup> These figures not representative. 74 requests were made between May 2000 and December 2001

Denton was the only institution with a well established unit. The other three were all starting up or piloting new services, and this accounts for the relatively low take up during the data collection period. On the positive side, however, there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that those students who did make use of the service found it extremely valuable, and tended to use it on a regular basis.

Ashton was the only institution to charge students for postal loans, and these charges – and particularly the requirement to pay an up-front registration fee – probably inhibited take up of the service.

### Library staff observations

Library staff involved in delivering the postal loans service were invited to comment on their experiences to date. These

experiences were specific to each institution (see Table 1b) but a number of generic issues emerged:

- Problems with identifying students eligible to use the service. Good liaison with Registry and School Administrators is extremely important.
- Effective publicity and promotion is required (see below).
- Development and co-ordination of the service is time consuming. This factor needs to be included in evaluation of the pilots.

### Publicity and promotion

Effective publicity and promotion of postal loan services were felt to be critical in ensuring all students were at least aware of what was available. Although the group

recognised that good promotion does not necessarily lead to good take-up, a number of ideas for promoting the service were discussed:

- Glossy leaflet, preferably produced professionally
- Web pages
- Inductions, ideally co-presented with academic staff
- Email to tutors
- Mailshot to distance learners
- Direct contact with School Administrators (in order to identify eligible courses)
- School newsletters
- Posters in Schools and Library
- Display in library foyer/communal areas

**Table 1b Postal loans services : staff observations December 2001**

University	Comments/observations from the Off Campus staff about the service to date
Ashton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff enjoy providing a more personal service and entering into a dialogue with user</li> <li>• Remembering to check the email account for incoming on-line requests can be a problem</li> <li>• References supplied can be poor (in some cases because of incomplete references provided by lecturers)</li> <li>• Many articles that should be in stock are not – leading to disappointment and embarrassment</li> <li>• Administration of the service is cumbersome and bitty</li> <li>• Emphasis on speed of reply (same day service) can place staff under pressure</li> <li>• There has been one instance where copyright was breached in that it was noticed that three users on the same module had requested exactly the same three articles</li> <li>• The on-line registration forms are sometimes awkward to decipher when they come through to the email account</li> </ul>
Burton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New initiative which will take time to establish</li> <li>• Gradual increase in the number of students registering but few have gone beyond the initial contact stage. Reasons may be that distance learning courses may provide all the materials the students need, the growth of valuable and free material on the web etc.</li> <li>• Need to look at how we promote the service emphasising our flexibility and responsiveness to student's needs</li> </ul>
Carlton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing/co-ordinating the service – takes a lot of time</li> <li>• Enrolment/registry issues – time consuming for staff to check enrolment with School/Student Office</li> </ul>
Denton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems can arise when obtaining items from other sites: adds a delay and items can go missing</li> <li>• Offsite courses often have complications with the enrolment procedures. Offsite staff have to negotiate with students who are anxious to use our services but aren't yet properly enrolled</li> <li>• Decisions on which courses are eligible can be sensitive and political</li> <li>• Students perception of what is a distance learner can be different to our criteria</li> </ul>

## Mystery Shopper Exercise to Evaluate Ease of Access to Web Based Information from Off Campus

The Mystery Shopper exercise was effectively a self-contained project and is written up accordingly, in some detail.

### Aims

The main purpose of the Mystery Shopper exercise was to evaluate the ease with which Off Campus students could access and obtain information from the Library/Learning Centre web pages of the four universities. The Shoppers would be able to highlight some of the difficulties Off Campus students experience. Their suggestions on how to rectify some of these problems could also give a useful insight into how the participating institutions could work to improve their web pages.

### Methodology

Questions (Appendix 1.2, page 22) were constructed and broken down into various parts so that three variables could be assessed:

- Success in finding the required information
- Ease of access
- Time taken

Two volunteers from each institution were selected. It was felt that one volunteer should have moderate IT skills and one should be more experienced to give a representative picture of Off Campus students. Appendix 1.3 (page 25) outlines the IT background of the Shoppers.

Passwords were distributed to allow the Shoppers from each institution access to the four library web pages.

Nine of the ten questions were the same for all four sites. The last question was different for each site to test ease of access to a locally mounted information resource.

It was decided that the exercise should be conducted in the morning if possible when Internet speed would be less of a problem.

The two Shoppers from each institution were asked to access the sites in a predetermined order. This was intended to eliminate any bias towards later sites accessed which might be caused by growing familiarity with the questions

- Carlton – Carlton, Denton, Burton, Ashton
- Denton – Denton, Burton, Ashton, Carlton
- Burton – Burton, Ashton, Carlton, Denton
- Ashton – Ashton, Carlton, Denton, Burton

Each Mystery Shopper was given the exercise and asked to record the date and the start/finish time for each site

The exercise was carried out between the 18th and 25th February 2002.

Each university drew up a set of model answers to the questions.

Results from each university were tabulated (Appendix 1.4, page 27). These tables were then further processed into three summary tables in an attempt to address precisely the three variables listed:

- Success in finding the required information
- Ease of access
- Time taken

Staff from the four Universities interviewed their Mystery Shoppers after they had



completed the exercise to obtain feedback on their likes and dislikes of each site.

They also provided background information about the creation of the various websites as non-library staff may have been involved in production. This was to determine whether the design had any bearing on the ease of information retrieval or site navigation. (Appendix 1.5, page 34).

Finally, each University reported on measures it planned to take, as a result of the project, to improve its website.

## Key issues

### Analysis of the questions

Students working from within their home University learning centres may be able to begin their information search from the Learning Centre home page. However, Off Campus students are likely to start their search from the University home page.

Question 1 was designed to test how easy this initial navigation is.

Question 2 tests the OPAC: how easy is it to access and find a specific catalogued item.

Questions 3, 4 and 6 test how easy it is to find specific information contained in the Learning Centre web pages.

The remaining questions (except for Question 10) address the accessibility of Internet resources using the Learning Centre website as a gateway. Question 9 tests the routing to an outside-recommended website. Questions 5, 7 and 8 require renewed authentication through Athens or other username and password. Question 5 Art Index/Abstracts is either an Internet or a locally mounted CD-ROM database.

The final question allows each University to test the access it has provided to a locally mounted information resource.

## The tables

A primary concern was whether our Shoppers succeeded in discovering the requisite information and whether there was any difference in the success rate between the four Learning Centre websites (Table A1.1, page 27).

Ease of access is explored in various ways in Tables A1.2 and A1.3 (pages 28-29). Three questions (Q1, Q5 and Q7) invite Shoppers to rate how easily they found the required answers. The scale ranged from 0 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy). Five questions (Q5, Q7, Q8, Q9 and Q10) ask Shoppers to indicate if they had any problems with the discovery process. These were tabulated as Yes/No answers in Table A1.2 and the number of "No's" (indicating no problems) summed. Thus throughout Table A1.2 higher numbers indicate better results.

A further measure of ease of access was thought to be how long each Shopper took to answer each question. This is tabulated in Table A1.3 (page 29). Where Shoppers were unable to answer a question, they were not however clearly asked to indicate how long they spent on their search. They were asked to give the total time spent on each exercise and this figure is used to derive the amount (called "Extra time") of time spent on unsolved questions. (A minus figure in the "Extra time" column indicates that the sum of the timings of individual questions is greater than the reported time, thus presumably indicating some inaccurate reporting by our Shoppers).

The raw data in Tables A1.4 to A1.7 (pages 30-33) provide useful means of comparing the experience of individual Shoppers accessing the four websites.

## Findings

### From the summary charts

Fig 1c indicates clearly that Shoppers had considerably greater success overall in finding the required answers on the Burton website. The other three attracted broadly similar results with Ashton marginally more successful than Carlton and Denton.

**Fig 1c Questions answered successfully**

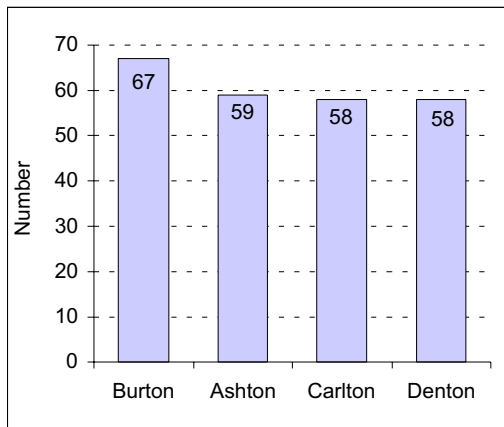
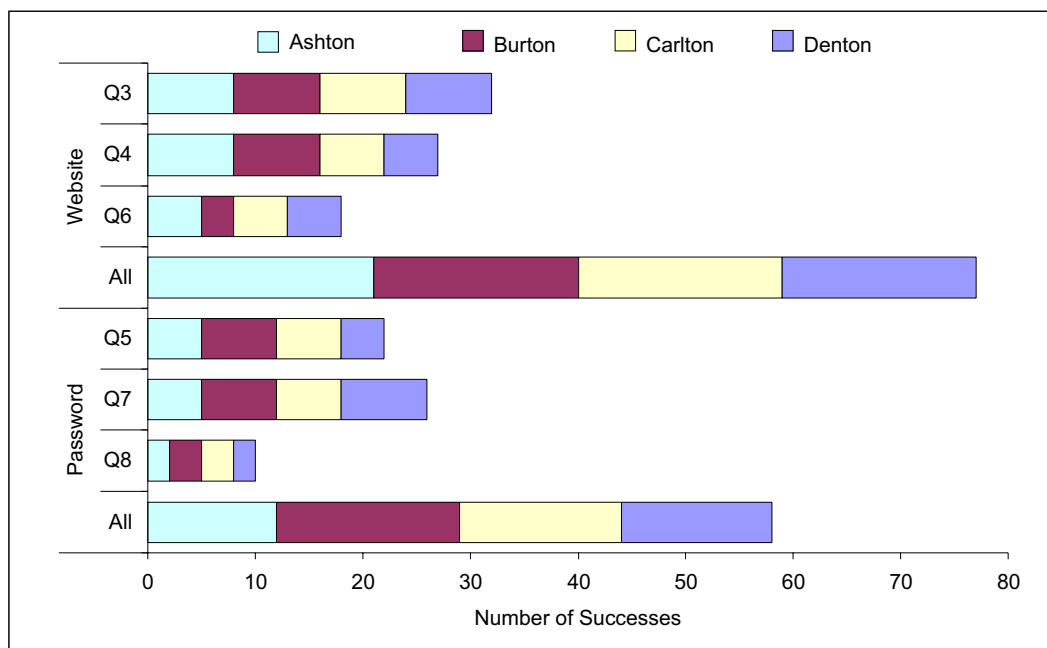


Fig 1d shows that questions where the answers were to be found directly on the Learning Centre websites were generally answered successfully (though answers to Q6 did not always accord - particularly at Burton - with those expected from the model answers). However, where username/password authentication was needed, the success rate fell to 75% or below (falling to a little over 25% on Q8 requiring a search of Cinahl).

The ratings in Fig 1d compare success rates with questions requiring basic navigation around the Learning Centre websites (Q3, Q4, Q6) and those requiring access to resources via usernames and passwords (Q5, Q7, Q8). In general, higher success rates were achieved where the answers were to be found directly from the website, e.g. Q3 on weekend opening hours achieved a 100% success rate, Q4 on locating a subject contact for law achieved 84%. In contrast, the average success rate for Q8, which required a search of Cinahl, was only 31% (see Table A1.1, page 27)

**Fig 1d Website versus password-required answers**



**Fig 1e Time spent at each website**

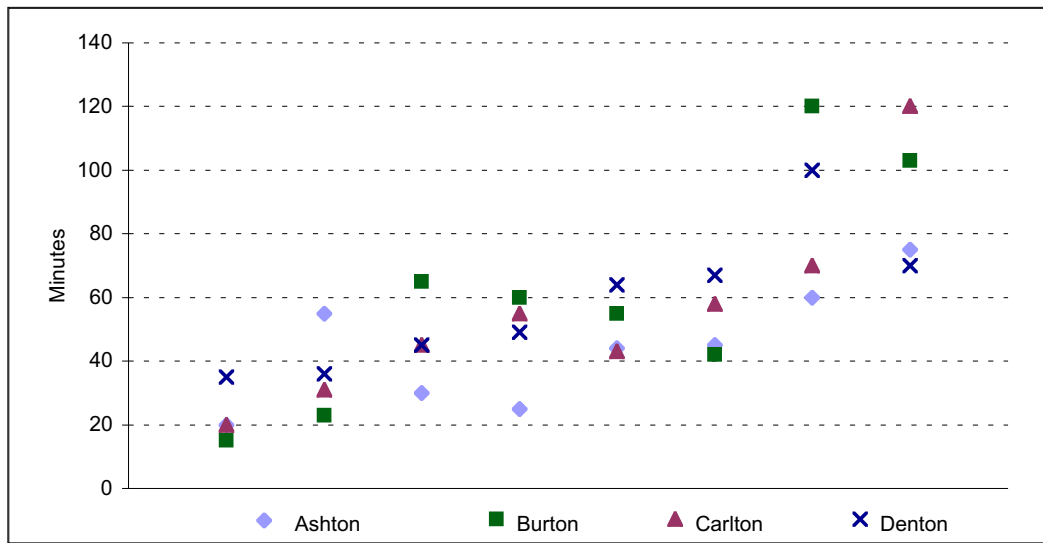


Fig 1e, which suggests that some Shoppers spent substantial amounts of time in trying, unsuccessfully, to answer some of the questions, confirms the need for improvement. We anticipated that 60 minutes would be the absolute maximum time needed to complete an exercise. Results indicate that no fewer than ten out of the thirty-two exercises took longer than this. Shoppers spent distinctly less time on accessing the Ashton site than any of the other three, which may suggest that the Ashton site is the best organised.

Burton gained the highest score overall in terms of ease of access, followed by Denton, Ashton and Carlton (Table A1.2, page 28). The results indicate that there is still much work to do by all of us to improve ease of access to our resources.

**Answers to individual questions**

**Q1 From University home page how easy is it to find library web pages?**

Most found the Library/Learning Centre pages easily. Two Shoppers quoted the on-line catalogue URL rather than the Library URL. Ashton was the easiest to access, Burton the most difficult. The time taken ranged between 10 seconds and 6 minutes. (One of the Carlton Shoppers could not access the Burton site initially because a

lower specification PC was being used which could not load the University home page. However, since the exercise was primarily about the Learning Centre site, the shopper was asked to try again using a different PC).

**Q2 Check library catalogue for particular title**

All found the class number for Charles Handy “Understanding Organizations” except the two Ashton shoppers who could not access their own institution’s catalogue on two separate occasions, and a Denton shopper who could not find the information at Carlton. Time taken was between ten seconds and four minutes.

**Q3 What are weekend opening hours?**

All shoppers found the information. No problems at any sites. Time taken: 15 seconds to 18 minutes.

**Q4 Who would you contact for subject information on law?**

All shoppers found the information at Burton and Ashton. At the Carlton site one shopper gave the name of the Head of Division for Law and the other found that the server was busy. Most problems occurred at the Denton site. Shoppers may have taken the subject route to the law pages which will have caused problems as contact names are not currently given on subject pages. The question specifically asked

for the name of the ‘librarian’. The subject staff at Denton have a different job title which did cause problems for one Shopper who had difficulty in distinguishing if the name given was the librarian. Time taken: 30 seconds to 15 minutes.

**Q5 Search Art Index / Art Abstracts. How easy is it to get to search screen?**

This was the first of the username/password questions, which caused problems at all sites. The main problem was passwords not being accepted after accessing the entry page. One Shopper stated that accessing Art Abstracts at the Ashton site was a long procedure, as a vast amount of information had to be read. Confusion may have arisen at Denton as Art Index is not available to Off Campus students and one shopper stated that there was no clear pathway. Burton attracted the best results, though one shopper spent 30 minutes on this question. Burton was rated the easiest, Ashton the most difficult.

Time taken: shoppers at Carlton reported taking the least time and at Ashton the most time on this question.

**Q6 If you were having problems accessing e-resources how would you get help?**

Most shoppers found an answer to this question without spending a lot of time on it. However in some cases the answer given was different from the model answer (for instance, some shoppers stated help could be found at the IT help desk rather than as stated in the web pages). Some of the results (particularly from Burton) have therefore been adjusted from the first draft of the report. Time taken: 20 seconds to 12 minutes.

**Q7 Do we have issues of (two) journals electronically in full text?**

This question was username/password controlled but did not present as many problems as Q5. Shoppers at two sites had problems with access.

**Q8 Using Cinahl do a keyword search on the Abortion Act 1967**

This question proved to be the most difficult for the majority of shoppers with a very low success rate and problems related to access. Shoppers could not find Cinahl; they felt that there was little explanation of Cinahl and if they managed to access the database they could not find the article. Whilst some of the difficulties experienced with this question may be due to the unfamiliarity of the shoppers with Cinahl, there were also problems with navigation. This highlights the need for all Universities to provide a more “user friendly” route to this site. All shoppers at the Ashton site and seven shoppers at Denton site reported problems.

**Q9 How best could you access the National Institute for Social Work website?**

Shoppers managed to answer this question without reporting too many problems. There was a wide variation in the number of stages (from 1 to 9) which indicates shoppers adopting many different search strategies. Several shoppers used “Google” as a search engine and not the library web pages. Shoppers visiting the Carlton site managed to find the information using fewer stages than the other sites.

**Q10**

This question was different for each site. Burton attracted the best result with Denton shoppers reporting the least problems. The Carlton result was poor probably because its question required a non-obvious navigation plus employment of a username/password.

**Mystery Shoppers’ Comments**

**Carlton**

In general Shoppers felt that the links from the University home page to the Learning Centre home page were easy to find. The links at the bottom of the page were the most useful but they were only seen when the required information was not found on the left-hand bar. Finding information about the library was clear and straightforward.

The Learning Centre home page was thought to be bland and “clinical” and required more colours. Problems arose with log on screens requiring passwords with no explanation or visible help particularly CD-ROMs. One Shopper commented that the i symbol in the A-Z list of e-journals did not have an information link. (This has now been removed.)

To access exam papers Off Campus students would be required to have some prior knowledge of their place in the Website. Shoppers felt that this was not obvious and suggested that some navigation information should be given on an opening screen.

Shoppers suggested more buttons with drop down menus linking to further concise explanations of various resources.

#### **Ashton**

This site was found to have an aesthetically pleasing Learning Centre home page. Overall Shoppers felt that this was a well-presented site with obvious, concise and understandable links. The straight link to the Learning Centre home page from the University home page was appreciated and easy to locate. Opening hours were clear and there were very good links to subject information. There were obvious links to the catalogue but too many “clicks” to reach the relevant search page and no “back button” facility.

Shoppers commented on the difficulty of accessing Art Index/Abstracts. This required the volunteers to read a vast amount of information. One shopper tried the electronic resource route but could not find the database. Shoppers suggested cross-referencing, navigating users to a more effective route.

Accessing exam papers was long-winded as Acrobat reader had to be installed which may be difficult for Off Campus users.

Cinahl was not obvious and the link from the “Alphabetical list of information databases and e-journals” was out of date.

Shoppers suggested Subject Librarians should be named and links to other websites should be included on an A-Z list further up the hierarchy.

#### **Denton**

The Learning Centre link from the University home page was not obvious at first glance and Shoppers had to scroll down the page to find the button. Some felt that this could be made more eye catching. The Learning Centre page first impression was that it was bland, dull and plain. The links were confusing and not clear either for the novice or the more experienced user.

Several Shoppers liked the student card examples explaining log on procedures for the catalogue and resources online. However, the catalogue link was not obvious from the Learning Centre page as all links had to be read before reaching the required information.

The A-Z of services was thought to be “too wordy and bunched up” and some users could be overwhelmed by the amount of text. Some frustration was experienced over password failure. Help with passwords was located under “frequently asked questions.” It may be more useful to display this in the main menu.

There was some confusion over terminology because subject staff at Denton do not have ‘Librarian’ in their job titles.

Skills for learning was thought to be easy to find and well presented.

#### **Burton**

Overall the Library home page was considered to be straightforward and easy to navigate. The layout was clear and logical with adequate explanations of Athens authentication. The OPAC was uncomplicated with use of the “back arrow”

for navigation. Subject contacts and electronic services had minimal links with good descriptions and Off Campus resources were prominently displayed.

Shoppers did not like the black screen of Burton's University home page or the fact that the Library was not given priority from this page. It was felt that the library should be given a higher profile. (One of the Carlton Shoppers could not access the Burton site initially because a lower specification PC was being used which could not load the University home page).

### Limitations

Limitations of the study were as follows:

- Problems with down time. This was experienced by Ashton Shoppers trying to access their own site on the days they completed the exercise. This can cause frustration for users but highlights computer problems rather than navigation problems. All users could encounter this problem at any time therefore the exercise can be equated to "real life" experience.
- Problems with authentication – username and passwords not being accepted or links not working.
- Trying to select volunteers to complete the exercise was demanding. It was necessary to select Mystery Shoppers with various levels of IT skills to reflect Off Campus students (Appendix 1.3). Selection was limited to members of staff available at the time the exercise was to be carried out. The experience of the shoppers was difficult to quantify as most used the Internet as part of their daily routine. Selecting novice Internet users may be a consideration for further investigation (Carlton initially tried to use a novice Shopper – a non-student Shelves – and provided an hour's training in logging on and using Internet Explorer. However they were unable to carry out the Exercise without continual recourse to IT Help staff for assistance,

which – though interesting – invalidates the methodology).

- Problems with individual questions – for example Q5 asked the Shopper to access the Art Abstract search screen. Most Shoppers stated that they completed the task but they were not asked to open any documents. The question may need refining so that proof of reaching the desired answer is clear. Most Shoppers had problems with Q8, using Cinahl. The question assumes that the shoppers know Cinahl is a nursing database. Some tried keyword searches, which slowed down the searching process.
- Several Shoppers used "Google" rather than the Learning Centre home pages when searching for the answer to Q9 although the question instructed the Shopper to start from the LC home page. This could reflect Off Campus students who may be familiar with "search engines" and keyword searches. This may be less obvious to novice Internet users.
- Some limitations have been seen in the pressure Shoppers may have experienced trying to complete the task whilst carrying out their other library duties.

### Conclusions and outcomes

Overall the Mystery Shopper exercise has proved to be useful to the four participating institutions. Each university has addressed the suggestions highlighted by the Shoppers in various ways.

In general it was found that there was a need for Off Campus access to electronic resources to be streamlined for example:

- Providing a subject based approach
- Providing seamless access to e-resources
- Having general search facilities, incorporating a search engine
- Designing more straightforward navigation

- Reducing multiple passwords, aiming for single authentication of user providing unrestricted access to eligible resources.

Each University has responded with a list of improvements to its website planned as a result of the Mystery Shopper exercise, and these are given below:

#### **Carlton**

*Currently we are in the process of reviewing the website. The results of this exercise have clearly identified navigation as being a particular weakness of our site. At the moment we are restructuring the architecture of the site in order to reduce the number of “clicks” before reaching the desired target. We are undertaking the challenge of making the site more intuitive and also looking to offer a subject based approach to finding information as an alternative to a media/medium approach. As well as this structural development we are developing other tools to add to the site which should be of benefit to the end user.*

#### **Ashton**

*Our new Web Developer will be completely re-launching the Learning Centre Website in time for the beginning of the next session.*

*The Mystery Shopper exercise demonstrated (fairly conclusively) what was already known, i.e. that the procedures for remote users to access some of our subscribed electronic resources were far too cumbersome. Thus, though not specifically resulting from the findings of the Mystery Shopper exercise but supported by them, it is intended to make access (both on and Off Campus) to electronic resources much more straightforward.*

*There are four strands being investigated which singly or in conjunction will achieve this:*

- *Use a search engine approach to direct users, via their subject pages, to the resource most suitable to their needs. The search will return not only to the*

*most relevant resource but will also provide easier instructions about how to authenticate.*

- *Using an Authentication tool to authenticate registered users to access the web catalogue and thereafter provide unimpeded access to e-resources to which they are eligible.*
- *Beta testing a third party product which would allow users to tailor their own one-stop shop gateway to our electronic resources via one log-in.*
- *Use of an aggregator’s search engine which has the potential to provide a search facility across all our electronic holdings as well as just one level of authentication.*

*Meanwhile the debate about having a separate A-Z list of e-journals on the web pages continues. There are still significant numbers of individual titles provided by the aggregating services, which are not listed on the catalogue. However at the moment the case is still argued that it would be better to dedicate resources to achieve better catalogue coverage and to go with the search engine approach for tracing titles on the web pages.*

#### **Denton**

*Various issues clearly need to be addressed in the light of the Mystery Shopper exercise.*

*Questions which required a password created the most difficulty. Two practical steps can be taken quickly.*

- *A button stating “Not available Off Campus” has been already added to the links for all resources which can only be accessed from campus.*
- *Against each resource there is currently a “Connect” and “Password” button. The order of the “Connect” and “Password” buttons will be switched and the text on the buttons made more meaningful. An “Info” button will be created for each resource which includes*

*instructions on accessing that specific item. There may, for instance, be a button saying “Info” then “Get Password” and finally a button saying “Connect to Resource”*

*In the long term Denton is endeavouring to make access to all resources as seamless as possible. Various projects are underway including WebCT and Campus Pipeline which facilitate this.*

*Question 4, which asked Mystery Shoppers to identify the appropriate librarian for law caused problems on the Denton site. This information is currently only accessible via the “Help and Contacts” link. Contact details for subject staff will be added to the Subject pages as this is where most Mystery Shoppers expected to find it. Some further thought should be given to the wording and position of the “Help and Contacts” button as users do not quickly identify this facility.*

*Generally a search facility which could be targeted at the Learning Centre pages would have helped with some of the issues such as not being able to locate CINAHL. The Web development team is working with the University to make a search facility available.*

*The position of the Learning Centre button on the Denton home page was criticised by one Mystery Shopper. It can be difficult to spot on some screen configurations. This point should be raised again with the University.*

#### **Burton**

*Although our website came out more favourably than the others there is still plenty of room for improvement. The main problem we identified was the apparent overload of information for the Off Campus user. A lot of the information contained within the website is not relevant to the Off Campus student therefore we created an Off Campus section aimed specifically at that type of user. Whilst this section assists the user, they still have to navigate themselves*

*to various other parts of the website; this is where the problems arose. Therefore we have started to create a searchable database for Off Campus users.*

*In conjunction with a private company, we are in the process of developing a database that will include everything that an Off Campus user would need to support their studies. There will be direct access to online databases, electronic journals, useful websites, our own library catalogue etc. All of this will be available from one searchable website making it much easier for them to access the various services we offer. As you can imagine this site will be very time consuming to construct but we hope to launch a fully operational version to all Off Campus students by September 2002.*

#### **Evaluation of the Mystery Shopper exercise**

Before repeating this exercise certain areas need clarifying, for example:

- Questions need refining to ensure that the responses illuminate the specific aims of the project.
- It is suggested that more shoppers should be selected to give a clearer picture of the accessibility of our websites to the various types of Off Campus users.
- Fewer questions should be included on the questionnaire so that specific problem areas can be analysed in greater detail.
- Model answers should be available at an early stage to ensure accuracy in analysis of the responses.

Even within the limitations this year, we do feel that the basic methodology seems valid and that the exercise has provided valuable insights into how easily our users are able to access and obtain information from our websites. It could usefully be repeated next year after each university has had the opportunity to remedy shortcomings identified this time.



## Usage of Electronic Resources

One of the key Off Campus services we deliver is the provision of electronic information. As we all know, the precise measurement of usage of e-resources is a complex and developing area, and subject to debate at national and international level.

The aims of the Off Campus project were relatively modest

- To share experience of collecting and recording usage of data
- To ascertain whether comparisons across the institutions was a) possible and b) meaningful

The sharing of experience was undertaken informally, and in particular drew on the work being carried out at Ashton University. At Ashton, usage statistics from all available sources are extracted, manipulated into an accessible format (e.g. Microsoft Access or Excel), and presented in a digestible form for library staff. They are then stored on an intranet and are regularly updated.

The comparison of usage statistics across institutions was undertaken more formally, and is recorded below:

### Methodology

Four sample electronic resources were selected for comparison. The criteria for selecting the resources chosen were:

- They had to be common to all four universities
- Usage statistics had to be available

Usage statistics were extracted at each University library and tabulated for comparison. Number of Logins/Sessions and number of Searches were the particular figures compared. These are commonly supplied measures of usage and are both distinct terms comparable across different services. Results are given in Table 1f (page 17).

### Problems

It must be stated from the outset that the figures quoted do not represent solely Off Campus usage of any of the resources sampled. The figures at best represent a combination of accesses from a specific URL domain (on campus) and accesses from site identifiable Athens authentications (Off Campus, or themselves on and Off Campus). As the project as a whole is looking at Off Campus provision, it is recognised that this represents a major flaw in these particular findings. However, these were the only available figures that were known of at the time. The results (such as they are) are presented here as a basis for discussion about how the exercise could be repeated more effectively when available technology enables on and Off Campus usage to be monitored more easily.

### Results

#### Inferences

**GALE** – In fact, of the individual databases subscribed to under GALE only two were common across two of the sites. Both Burton and Carlton subscribe to the Infotrac Computer Database within GALE.

When comparing this particular database there were fourteen times as many logins/Sessions at Burton than at Carlton, with over fifteen times as many searches. It can be seen from the table that users at Burton have had access to this database for approximately seven years in comparison to the situation at Carlton where it is a relatively new resource first taken about a year ago.

Even with a relatively dynamic student user group, cultural embedding over time could be a possible explanation of increased usage, and in common with paper subscriptions a longer back-run will necessarily invite more searches.

**Table 1f Comparison of usage figures of selected e-resources during November 2001****Overarching service: GALE**

Site	Specific database/service	Date first subscribed	Logins/sessions	Searches	Searches: logins
Carlton	General Academic ASAP	1988	298	1138	3.82
	Infotrac Computer Database	2001	50	127	2.54
Ashton	European Business ASAP	30-11-00	170	454	2.67
	F & S Index Plus Text	1-3-00	97	193	1.99
	UK National Newspapers	1-4-01	334	4371	13.09
Denton	Infotrac General Periodicals	1-8-99	315	988	3.14
Burton	Infotrac Computer Database	c.1995	698	1941	2.78

**Overarching service: EBSCO**

Site	Specific database/service	Date first subscribed	Logins/sessions	Searches	Searches: logins
Carlton	Business Source Elite	November 2000	2187	5328	2.43
Ashton	Business Source Premier	1-2-01	655	1395	2.13
Denton	Business Source Premier	September 1999		3375	
	Academic Search Elite	September 1999		10022	
Burton	Business Source Elite	c.1996	1867	3739	2.00

**Overarching service: Web of Science**

Site	Date first subscribed	Logins/sessions	Searches	Searches: logins
Carlton	2000	848	2340	2.75
Ashton	1-3-01	780	1807	2.32
Denton	c. September 2000	250	381	1.52
Burton	c.1998	1956	5859	3.00

**Overarching service: ZETOC**

Site	Date first subscribed	Logins/sessions	Searches	Searches: logins
Carlton	April 2000	279	560	2.01
Ashton	September 2000	44	123	2.80
Denton	8-5-01	149	357	2.40
Burton	2000	172 (on) 69 (off)	329 (on campus)	1.91

**EBSCO** – Two sites take Business Source Elite and two sites take Business Source Premier via EBSCO. In addition Denton also takes Academic Search Elite. This latter point proved a slight complication as EBSCO only provides figures for the number of Sessions/Logins for the service as a whole, and then breaks down the number of searches between the separate databases.

Thus, comparing numbers of searches on Business Source Premier between Denton and Ashton, Denton the longer subscriber at approximately sixteen months shows 2.4 times the number of searches. Apart from the possible reasons suggested above for GALE, another factor here might be the second database subscribed to via EBSCO at Denton. Even if the two databases taken at Denton are largely accessed independently, if the user interfaces and search mechanisms are the same, user familiarity with one might predispose them to use the other.

When the figures for Business Source Elite are considered, in contrast to the situation with GALE and Business Source Premier, the more recent subscriber (Carlton in November 2000) shows 17% more sessions and 42% more searches than Burton who have taken the database for significantly longer (c.1996). Other factors might be at play here. Carlton for example might be promoting the service in a more effective or high profile way, or indeed irrespective of overall student numbers might have a larger relevant user group in terms of a specific subject area or school/department.

**Web of Science** – Burton is the longest subscriber, having taken the service since approximately 1998, and displays by far the highest number of Sessions/Logins and number of searches. The number of searches per login would also seem to be higher. The reasons stated for GALE might also be at play here i.e. cultural embedding and familiarity, together with a longer searchable 'holdings'. Denton, by far the largest in

terms of student numbers, has the lowest number of Sessions/Logins as well as the smallest Sessions/Logins:Searches ratio. This is an interesting result, particularly for a database of such broad subject coverage. The 'relative importance' of this particular service at Denton, in terms of promotion and user education, might be worth investigating. Perhaps an alternative, comparable service is preferred by library staff and given a higher profile when offered to users.

**ZETOC** – Is a free service and the 'Date First Subscribed' indicates the date each site first started promoting the service to its users. Carlton shows a significantly higher number of Sessions/Logins and number of searches. The figures for Denton are again comparatively low considering the size of its student population. Although usage is lowest at Ashton, it is interesting to note that the ratio of Sessions/Logins: Number of Searches is the highest. A possible explanation for this is that a particular group of users is being given extra training and their increased confidence is encouraging them to spend longer searching the database.

### **Conclusion/recommendations:**

The whole area of e-resources is a very complex and dynamic one. The number of e-titles taken by University Libraries continues to increase, not least to support flexible and possibly remote teaching methods. As sites begin to experience a reduction in the number of physical visits to their libraries the provision of reliable figures for 'virtual access' to their services is becoming increasingly important.

As particular e-titles are made available via different routes i.e. through different 'aggregating services' and 'deals' the aspiration to compare usage across different universities is a valid one. By exchanging experiences each site can hopefully become better informed to tailor its portfolio of

e-titles and achieve optimum accessibility and cost effectiveness.

This feasibility study has been very much a learning exercise. When repeated, the selection of titles being compared should take into account the following considerations:

- Is the resource discrete in itself or a compilation/aggregation?
- If the resource provides more than one service are the same services taken by each site?
- Can the service be accessed by more than one route?
- Is the service accessed by the same route across each site?
- Can the statistics provided differentiate between on and Off Campus usage?
- Is the service promoted evenly across the user population or targeted at particular groups?
- Usage of a particular resource cannot necessarily be considered in isolation. Availability of alternative and comparable services (in terms of subject coverage) needs to be looked at as well.

Finally, with ATHENS providing usage statistics themselves and with the introduction of once only authentication gateways to electronic resources such as Swetswise and OneLog it should soon be much more straight forward to differentiate between on and Off Campus usage.

## Summary of Key Findings

### Postal loan services

Take up of the postal loan service was relatively low in all four institutions. This may be explained in part by the newness of the service (in three out of four institutions)

and in part by the costs to users (especially at Ashton). Anecdotal evidence indicated that those students who did make use of the postal loan service valued it and tended to use it on a regular basis. The project group recognised that effective promotion of the service was critical, but also that a service of this nature is only ever likely to be taken up by a minority of users. The group felt it was important that libraries were seen to be responding to student need in a flexible and proactive way.

### Off Campus access to web based resources

The Mystery Shopper exercise produced some very interesting results, and confirmed what we already suspected in terms of ease of access to resources : username/password authentication presents huge obstacles to off campus access. Where authentication was required in the exercise, the success rate fell to 75% or below, and as low as 25% on the question requiring use of Cinahl.

Navigation around the websites themselves was slightly less problematic, but in ten of the thirty-two exercises, the time taken to complete the exercise was in excess of the 60 minutes allowed for. Such excessive lengths of time indicate the need for all four institutions to improve ease of access to their electronic resources.

As might be expected, the recommendations from the exercise centred on the need to provide seamless access to electronic resources, single sign-on, a single search facility, and more straightforward navigation.

### Usage of electronic resources

In terms of tangible outcomes this was the least satisfactory part of the Off Campus project. It proved surprisingly difficult to identify four services which were common to all institutions, and which were accessed via the same route. It was impossible to

consistently differentiate between on campus and off campus usage, and it was also difficult to identify the potential size of the user population – thereby rendering comparison between the institutions almost meaningless. This notwithstanding, the process of attempting to compare usage was an interesting one, and there could be merit in the future in refining the methodology and repeating the exercise.

## **Conclusions**

The Off Campus benchmarking project was broad ranging, and rather than attempt to produce a single model of best practice it aimed to investigate a number of disparate areas. Much of the work was exploratory, but nonetheless produced some extremely interesting results.

Sharing experience between the four institutions was undoubtedly one of the main benefits of the project. Offering a postal

loans service was a new venture for most of the institutions, and being able to liaise with colleagues in similar posts in the project institutions was invaluable. Similarly, with regards to the measurement of electronic usage statistics, the group was able to learn from the work undertaken by one of the institutions. Although the exercise to compare usage across the four institutions was inconclusive, the process itself was a learning experience.

The Mystery Shopper exercise was a fascinating project in itself, and represented the first time any of the four partner institutions had systematically sought to test the accessibility of their web pages. This approach will be refined and extended next year, to measure the improvements to the current web pages.

## Appendix 1.1 Benchmarking Off Campus Services Template

Remote Services/ User categories	Also applies to	Web site	Web OPAC	CDROM network	Digitised course resources	E-books	Internet databases	Email account	Dedicated phone line	Electronic Enquiry Desk	Electronic Subject searches	UK Libs Plus	Other co-operative Agreements	Postal book loan	Postal photocopy delivery	Postal ILL delivery
Campus-based FT students																
PT students	Distance learners Placement students Out-centre students															
Distance learners (UK&Ireland)																
Distance learners (Overseas)																
Special needs students																
Other students	Franchise Overseas Accredited institution Partner institution															
Staff (ft, pt)	Staff (contract)															
Staff (associated)																
Staff (other)	Accredited lecturers Franchise staff Partner institution															
Other users																

## Appendix 1.2 Mystery Shopper Questionnaire

ASHTON UNIVERSITY \* BURTON UNIVERSITY \* CARLTON UNIVERSITY \* DENTON UNIVERSITY

### Off Campus benchmarking project : Mystery shopper exercise

The four Universities above are undertaking a project on Off Campus library services to students. Part of the project involves an assessment of the ease with which Off Campus students can access information through the web pages of their institution's library/learning centre – hence this 'mystery shopper' exercise. Thank you for agreeing to take part.

Before starting the exercise please read through all the questions.

Now record the date and start time here : Date \_\_\_\_\_ Start time \_\_\_\_\_

1 a) From the University home page, how easy is it to find the Library/Learning Centre pages?

Please circle on the scale below:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Very difficult					Very easy

b) Please write down the URL of the page you ended up at:

c) Approximately how long did it take to get there (in minutes or seconds)?

2. Check the library catalogue to see if the Library/Learning Centre has any copies of:

Charles Handy Understanding organizations

a) Please write down the class number

b) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

3. a) What are the weekend opening hours of the Learning Centre during term time?

b) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

4. a) Who would you contact for subject information on Law? (give the name of the librarian or an email address)

b) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

- 
5. a) You want to search either Art Index or Art Abstracts (this may be a CD-Rom database). How easy is it to get to the search screen?

Please circle on the scale below:

0      1      2      3      4      5

Very  
difficult

Very easy

- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

- 
6. a) If you were having problems accessing electronic resources (e.g. with logging in), how would you get help?

- b) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

7. a) Do we have any issues of the following journals electronically in full text?

British Journal of Social Work    Yes / No

British Journal of Sociology    Yes / No

- b) Choose one of these titles and indicate how easy it is to access the full text

Please circle on the scale below:

0      1      2      3      4      5

Very  
difficult

Very easy

- c) Please note any problems you had in finding the information
- d) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?
8. a) Using Cinahl 1999 do a keyword search on the Abortion Act 1967. What is the title of the journal in which you will find an article on legal issues?
- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

- 
9. a) How best could you access the National Institute for Social Work website, starting from the Library/Learning Centre home page? Please describe briefly the route you took:

- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?



---

10. (Carlton only)

- a) Find the full text of an exam paper for Psychology stage 2, January 1999, entitled "Psychology of Mental Illness" and write down its course code.
- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

---

10. a) (Ashton only) Find the full text of an exam paper for the module 'Sociology of the Media'.

- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

---

10. a) (Denton only) Find the resource called Skills for Learning and login. Under which main topic is information on writing a CV found?

- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information.
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

---

10. a) (Burton only)

Bridget Prentice is the Member of Parliament for which constituency?

- b) Please note any problems you had in finding the information.
- c) Approximately how long did it take you to find the information?

---

Now record the time you finished this exercise \_\_\_\_\_

Many thanks for your help.

## Appendix 1.3 Mystery Shopper Biographies

### Ashton University

#### Ashton 1 (less experienced)

Has worked as a part time shelver and lending counter assistant for several years. She would only use the Internet during the normal course of her work to look up book prices on Dawsons, and to search the Intranet for staff information. 'Ashton 1' has the Internet at home which she is used to using to find flight information, ordering books via Amazon and for theatre and hotel bookings.

#### Ashton 2 (moderately experienced)

Has been a part time library assistant in the Inter-Library Loans Department for about 12 months. She has the Internet at home but only uses it for e-mail and doing the occasional search for holidays etc. At work 'Ashton 2' is used to searching for e-journals via our own webpac, and accessing our bibliographic databases via a link to our IDN on the staff pc's. With the benefit of hindsight this almost acted against her in that it came as quite a surprise how complicated the extra authentication processes were for a student accessing resources from outside.

### Burton University

#### Burton 1 (less experienced)

Recently joined us as a General Assistant and had never used the internet prior to that. Uses the web still very infrequently, approx. 10 minutes per day. She does come from a banking background, so is accustomed to IT applications, but only of the in-house variety as employed by the bank.

#### Burton 2 (more experienced)

Due to conclude her Postgraduate Library Diploma this Summer. A psychology graduate, she has worked as a Learning and Information Assistant for 4 years, and regularly covers

the information desk by herself. She is very IT literate and pretty experienced in using the web for information retrieval

### Carlton University

#### Carlton 1 (less experienced)

Part-time Learning Centre assistant for just over a year. Familiar with library management system and with word processing and email. Only a very limited familiarity with the Internet, and does not have Internet access at home.

#### Carlton 2 (more experienced)

Member of reception staff and shelver. Politics graduate of De Montfort, and also an MA. Currently studying adult education teaching certificate at Nottingham. Considerable experience of the Internet, both for her courses and at home.

## **Denton University**

### **Denton 1 (less experienced)**

Peak time Learning Centre assistant. Uses web catalogue at work. No other use of electronic resources. Uses internet at home to access information to help with children's homework and family business.

### **Denton 2 (more experienced)**

Graduate Trainee. First degree in history. Used web catalogue for locating books and journals. No other use of electronic resources. Uses Internet frequently for personal use including search engines.

Uses Internet occasionally at work to check bibliographic details.

## Appendix 1.4 Results of Mystery Shopper exercise

Table A1.1 Success in finding required information

Target Shopper	Q1 Found	Q2 Found	Q3 Found	Q4 Found	Q5 Success	Q6 Found	Q7 Found	Q8 Found	Q9 Success	Q10 Found	Total found
<b>Carlton</b>											
C1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
A1	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	7
D1	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	4
B1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	6
C2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	9
A2	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	4
D2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	9
B2	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Total	7	7	8	6	6	5	6	3	5	5	58
<b>Ashton</b>											
C1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	8
A1	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	5
D1	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	8
B1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	8
C2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	8
A2	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	5
D2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	9
B2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	8
Total	8	6	8	8	5	5	5	2	6	6	59
<b>Denton</b>											
C1	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	8
A1	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
D1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	8
B1	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	5
C2	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	7
A2	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	5
D2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	9
B2	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Total	6	8	8	5	4	5	8	2	5	7	58
<b>Burton</b>											
C1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
A1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	8
D1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	8
B1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	8
C2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	8
A2	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	7
D2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	9
B2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
Total	8	8	8	8	7	3	7	3	7	8	67
Average (out of 8)	7.25	7.25	8	6.75	5.5	4.5	6.5	2.5	5.75	6.5	60.5 (out of 80)
Total (out of 32)	29	29	32	27	22	18	26	10	23	26	242 (out of 320)

**Table A1.2 Ease of access**

Target Shopper	Q1	Q5		Q7		Q8	Q9		Q10	Total
	Rating*	Rating*	Problems	Rating*	Problems	Problems	Stages	Problems	Problems	
<b>Carlton</b>										
C1	4	3	✓	5	X	X	4	X	X	
A1	5		✓		✓	✓	2	X	✓	
D1	3	0	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
B1	5	2	✓	3	X	✓		✓	✓	
C2	5	4	X	4	X	✓	2	X	✓	
A2	3	0	✓	0	✓	✓		✓	✓	
D2	2	4	X	4	X	✓	2	✓	✓	
B2	4	3	X		X	X	4	✓	✓	
Average	3.9	2.0		2.0						2.6
Count (n)			3		5	2		3	1	14
<b>Ashton</b>										
C1	5	4	X	2	✓	✓	4	X	X	
A1	5		✓		✓	✓	2	X	✓	
D1	5	0	✓	0	✓	✓	1	X	X	
B1	5	3	X	4	X	✓	3	X	X	
C2	5	1	✓	5	X	✓		✓	X	
A2	5	0	✓		✓	✓	4	✓	✓	
D2	5	3	X	0	✓	✓	3	X	X	
B2	4	2	✓	4	X	✓	5	X	X	
Average	4.9	1.6		1.9						2.8
Count (n)			3		3	0		6	6	18
<b>Denton</b>										
C1	4	3	✓	2	X	✓	8	X	X	
A1	5	2	✓	4	✓	X	2	X	X	
D1	5	3	X		✓	✓		✓	X	
B1	5		✓	2	✓	✓		✓	X	
C2	5	2	X	3	X	✓		✓	X	
A2	3	2	✓	0	✓	✓		X	✓	
D2	5	3	X	2	✓	✓	3	X	X	
B2	3	3	✓	4	X	✓	5	✓	X	
Average	4.4	2.3		2.1						2.9
Count (n)			3		3	1		4	7	18
<b>Burton</b>										
C1	4	4	X	4	X	X	9	X	X	
A1	3	4	✓	0	✓	✓	2	✓	✓	
D1	5	5	X	4	✓	✓	2	X	X	
B1	5	3	X	2	✓	✓	2	X	X	
C2	4	1	✓	5	X	✓		✓	X	
A2	2		✓	0	✓	✓	2	✓	X	
D2	3	4	X	4	X	✓	3	X	X	
B2	4	4	X	4	X	X	5	X	✓	
Average	3.8	3.1		2.9						3.3
Count (n)			5		4	2		5	6	22
<b>Totals</b>										
Average (out of 5)	4.2	2.3		2.2						2.9 (out of 5)
Count (n) (out of 32)			14		15	5		18	20	72 (out of 160)
Average Count (n) (out of 8)			3.5		3.75	1.25		4.5	5	18 (out of 40)

\* Rating scale from 0 = very difficult to 5 = very easy

Table A1.3 Time taken (in minutes)

Target Shopper	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Extra time	Total
<b>Carlton</b>												
C1	0.3	0.75	0.7	1	1.5	2	2	4	2	2.5	41.25	58
A1	0.5	1	5	5				5	0.5	20	33	70
D1	2	1	3	3	5	4	7	5	4	6	3	43
B1	0.5	0.5	1	0.3	10	10	5		5	10	2.7	45
C2	1	2	1	1	0.5	1	2		2	6	38.5	55
A2	2	4	18	10	20	10	15	10			31	120
D2	1	0.3	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	1	5	5	3.7	20
B2	0.2	0.1	0.3		0.25	1	1	0.5		1.5	26.15	31
Total time	7.5	9.65	30	20.8	37.75	29	33	25.5	18.5	51	179.3	442
<b>Ashton</b>												
C1	1	2	1	2	2	1	12	6	0.75	6	11.25	45
A1	0.1	10	1	5				10	1	10	22.9	60
D1	0.5	3	2	3	6	2	6	7	5	2	7.5	44
B1	0.3	2	0.5	0.3	10	1	2	10	0.5	7.5	-4.1	30
C2	2	5	5	1	10	10	2			15	-25	25
A2	1	5	3	5	20	5	5	12	15	5	-1	75
D2	0.2	0.5	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.5	2	1	0.3	1	13.45	20
B2	0.2	0.2	0.25	0.2	15	10	10			1	18.15	55
Total time	5.3	27.7	13	16.8	63.5	29.5	39	46	22.55	47.5	43.15	354
<b>Denton</b>												
C1	0.75	1	2.5	3	1.7	0.75	5	3	2	1	46.3	67
A1	1	5	5	10	10	10	20	5	1	10	23	100
D1	1.25	0.8	0.5	4	2	5.3	10.5		7	1.5	31.15	64
B1	0.5	1	1	5	10	5	10	5		5	2.5	45
C2	1	10		15	8	3	10			8	-6	49
A2	6	2	2	15	10		15	10			10	70
D2	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.3	2	0.3	5	7	1	0.5	17.2	35
B2	0.3	1.5	1	0.75	0.5	1	0.5	2	2	0.75	25.7	36
Total time	11.3	22	12.5	53.05	44.2	25.35	76	32	13	26.75	149.85	466
<b>Burton</b>												
C1	0.5	2	1	1	2.5	0.3	6	4	2		22.7	42
A1	5	4	5	35	15	3	20	10	10	5	8	120
D1	2	1	1	2	3	8	10	5	6	4	13	55
B1	0.3	3	2	5	5	5	10		2	2	30.7	65
C2	2	4	1	2	8	3	12	5	15		8	60
A2	10	2	1	8	30	12	12	10	10	20	-12	103
D2	0.3	0.5	0.25	0.5	0.3	2	1	2	0.5	2	5.65	15
B2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.25	0.1	0.25	1	0.4	0.4	1.5	18.5	23
Total time	20.3	16.7	11.45	53.75	63.9	33.55	72	36.4	45.9	34.5	94.55	483

**Table A1.4 Results from Carlton**

Target Site	Shopper 1 Carlton	Shopper 1 Denton	Shopper 1 Burton	Shopper 1 Ashton	Shopper 2 Carlton	Shopper 2 Denton	Shopper 2 Burton	Shopper 2 Ashton
<b>Q1</b>								
a Rating	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	5
b Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken	20 secs	45 secs	30 secs	1min	1 min	1 min	2 mins	2 mins
<b>Q2</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	45 secs	1 min	2 mins	2 mins	2mins	10 mins	4 mins	5 mins
<b>Q3</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	40 secs	2.5 mins	1 min	1 min	1 min		1 min	5 mins
<b>Q4</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
b Time taken	1 min	3 mins	1 min	2 min	1 min	15 mins	2 mins	1 min
<b>Q5</b>								
a Rating	3	3	4	4	4	2	3	1
b Problems	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓
c Time taken	1.5 mins	1min 40 secs	2.5 mins	2 mins	30 secs	8 mins	8 mins	10 mins
<b>Q6</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	2mins	45 secs	20 secs	1 min	1 min	3 mins	3 mins	10 mins
<b>Q7</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Rating	5	2	4	2	4	3	4	5
c Problems	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X
d Time taken	2 mins	5 mins	6 mins	12 mins	2 mins	10 mins	12 mins	2 mins
<b>Q8</b>								
a Found	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X
b Problems	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓
c Time taken	4 mins	3mins	4 mins	6 mins			5 mins	
<b>Q9</b>								
a Route No of stages	4	8	9	4	2			
b Problems	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken	2 mins	2mins	2 mins	45 secs	2 mins		15 mins	
<b>Q10</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Problems	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X
c Time taken	1.5 mins	1 min		6 mins	6 mins	8 mins		15 mins

Table A1.5 Results from Ashton

Target Site	Shopper 1 Ashton	Shopper 1 Carlton	Shopper 1 Denton	Shopper 1 Burton	Shopper 2 Ashton	Shopper 2 Carlton	Shopper 2 Denton	Shopper 2 Burton
<b>Q1</b>								
a Rating	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	2
b Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
c Time taken	5 sec	30 secs	1 min	5 mins	1 min	2 mins	6 mins	10 mins
<b>Q2</b>								
a Found	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	10 mins	1 min	5 mins	4 mins	5 mins	4 mins	2 mins	2 mins
<b>Q3</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	1 min	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins	3 mins	18 mins	2 mins	1 min
<b>Q4</b>								
a Found	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	5 mins	5 mins	10 mins	35 mins	5 mins	10 mins	15 mins	8 mins
<b>Q5</b>								
a Rating			2	4	0	0	2	
b Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken			10 mins	15 mins	20 mins	20 mins	10 mins	30 mins
<b>Q6</b>								
a Found	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
b Time taken			10 mins	3 mins	5 mins	10 mins		
<b>Q7</b>								
a Found	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
b Rating			4	0		0	0	0
c Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
d Time taken			20 mins	20 mins	5 mins	15 mins	15 mins	12 mins
<b>Q8</b>								
a Found	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
b Problems	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken	10 mins	5 mins	5 mins	10 mins	12 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins
<b>Q9</b>								
a Route No of stages	2	2	2	2	4			2
b Problems	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken	1 min	30 secs	1 min	10 mins	15 mins	10 mins		10 mins
<b>Q10</b>								
a Found	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
b Problems	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
c Time taken	10 mins	20 mins	10 mins	5 mins	5 mins	15 mins		20 mins



Table A1.6 Results from Denton

Target Site	Shopper 1 Denton	Shopper 1 Burton	Shopper 1 Ashton	Shopper 1 Carlton	Shopper 2 Denton	Shopper 2 Burton	Shopper 2 Ashton	Shopper 2 Carlton
<b>Q1</b>								
a Rating	5	5	5	3	5	3	5	2
b Found	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken	1.5 mins	2 mins	30 secs	2 mins	30 secs	20 secs	10 secs	1 min
<b>Q2</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	50 secs	1 min	3 mins	1 min	45 secs	30 secs	30 secs	20 secs
<b>Q3</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	30 secs	1 min	2 mins	3 mins	30 secs	15 secs	15 secs	1 min
<b>Q4</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	30 secs	2 mins	3 mins	3 mins	20 secs	30 secs	20 secs	30 secs
<b>Q5</b>								
a Rating	3	5	0	0	3	4	3	4
b Problems	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
c Time taken	2 mins	3 mins	6 mins	5 mins	2 mins	20 secs	30 secs	30 secs
<b>Q6</b>								
a Found	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	5 mins	8 mins	2 mins	4 mins	20 secs	2 mins	30 secs	1 min
<b>Q7</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Rating		4	0		2	4	0	4
c Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
d Time taken	10.5 mins	10 mins	6 mins	7 mins	5 mins	1 min	2 mins	1 min
<b>Q8</b>								
a Found	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
b Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken		5 mins	7 mins	5 mins	7 mins	2 mins	1 min	1 min
<b>Q9</b>								
a Route No of stages		2	1		3	3	3	2
b Problems	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
c Time taken	7 mins	6 mins	5 mins	4 mins	1 min	30 secs	20 secs	5 mins
<b>Q10</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Problems	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
c Time taken	1.5mins	4 mins	2 mins	6 mins	30 secs	2 mins	1 min	5 mins

Table A1.7 Results from Burton

Target Site	Shopper 1 Burton	Shopper 1 Ashton	Shopper 1 Carlton	Shopper 1 Denton	Shopper 2 Burton	Shopper 2 Ashton	Shopper 2 Carlton	Shopper 2 Denton
<b>Q1</b>								
a Rating	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	3
b Found	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
c Time taken	20 secs	20 secs	30 secs	30 secs	10 secs	10 secs	10 secs	20 secs
<b>Q2</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	3 mins	2 mins	30 secs	1 min	10 secs	10 secs	5 secs	1.5 mins
<b>Q3</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Time taken	2 mins	30 secs	1 min	1min	10 secs	15 secs	20 secs	1 min
<b>Q4</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
b Time Taken	5 mins	20 secs	20 secs	5 min	15 secs	10 secs		45 secs
<b>Q5</b>								
a Rating	3	3	2		4	2	3	3
b Problems	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
c Time taken	5 mins	10 mins	10 mins	10 mins	5 secs	15 mins	15 secs	30 secs
<b>Q6</b>								
a Found	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
b Time taken	5 mins	1 min	10 mins	5 mins	15 secs	10 mins	1 min	1 min
<b>Q7</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Rating	2	4	3	2	4	4		4
c Problems	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
d Time taken	10 mins	2 mins	5 mins	10 mins	1 min	10 mins	1 min	30 secs
<b>Q8</b>								
a Found	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
b Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
c Time taken		10 mins		5 mins	25 secs		30 secs	2 mins
<b>Q9</b>								
a Route No of stages	2	3			5	5	4	5
b Problems	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓
c Time taken	2 mins	30 secs	5 mins		25 secs			2 mins
<b>Q10</b>								
a Found	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b Problems	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
c Time taken	2 mins	5-10 mins	10 mins	5 mins	1.5 mins	1 min	1.5 mins	45 secs

## Appendix 1.5 Historical development of the websites

### Ashton University

The website for Ashton University's Library was first created in the mid 90's by a member of the library staff. At this time she was a subject librarian but had the necessary skills to create what was a basic, text-based, website. Over the years, the site was developed with the assistance of subject librarians and a working party, until approximately 2 years ago.

Since then the web pages have been re-designed twice, again using existing library staff. Responsibility for updating the content has been shared by media technicians and team representatives, under the steer of a project group.

In September 2001 two new posts were developed. One was a web developer, whose specific aim was to steer web page development and a second to co-ordinate electronic resource subscriptions. The latter works alongside the Library Systems team to try to improve access to electronic resources. The web developer is based within Library Systems and his primary tasks are to control web page development, undertake web page updates (with a half-time assistant), plan strategically for future web development, investigate web related technologies with a view to personalising content for users in the near future, investigate authentication methods with a view to automating authentication to web based resources.

Currently, the web developer is working on a completely new site, which will be database driven (this being the first step towards personalised content) and will be launched in time for the new academic year in Sept 2002. Alongside this the electronic resource "search and authenticate" web page will be launched, where users will be able to launch and authenticate to any web based resource which we subscribe to (if Off Campus).

### Burton University

The library website was first created in late 1994/early 1995 by a member of staff. At this time he was a subject librarian but had the necessary skills to create what was, at first, a rudimentary website.

Over the years, the site has been developed with the assistance of subject librarians, until approximately two years ago. The employment of an Electronic Resources co-ordinator has consolidated the updating and improvement of the website and now all changes go through this position.

It must be noted that from the initial creation of the site until the present day, all people involved have been Library employees, i.e. no external web professionals have been involved.

Prior to the results of this exercise, we had already embarked upon a website improvement process. We have entered into an agreement with a company named Esprit Soutron Partnership (ESP). We are already into the process of creating a searchable website, initially for Off Campus users. However, it is intended that the website will expand to become the new site for the library and learning resources.

## **Carlton University**

From 1996 to 2000 the Carlton University website consisted of static web pages listing internet, cd-rom and external web databases. Roughly the same information that appeared in the library printed guide was converted to web pages.

From September 2000 the electronic resource pages have been produced dynamically allowing increased entry points (e.g. by subject, by title, from where the resource can be used) and a search function.

The pages have been designed and produced by the two IT Advisors in the library. The design of the pages has been led by a general template produced for all university departments and by technical limitations.

The proliferation of databases used to produce the pages (from one to seven) and a move to a centralised web form has led to a redesign of the databases and navigational design of the pages. Improvements to reliability and navigational design will be in place by September 2002. Other improvements to searchability and subject access will be in place by September 2003.

## **Denton University**

In September 2001 the Learning Centre web pages were completely redesigned, rebranded and relaunched. The new website was intended to be straightforward for an independent user to exploit. An A-Z index was introduced so a user could find the resources without detailed knowledge. A key objective was intuitive navigation to enable users to get where they wanted to be with as few clicks and as little scrolling as possible. User education was developed by the use of subject pages at an expert or novice level.

The initial concept for the redesign was developed by two senior members of Learning Centre staff, both with IT and library expertise. These ideas were then presented to a forum of subject librarians and Information Officers and the input contributed to further developments. The web team provided the technical support to make the redesign a reality.

