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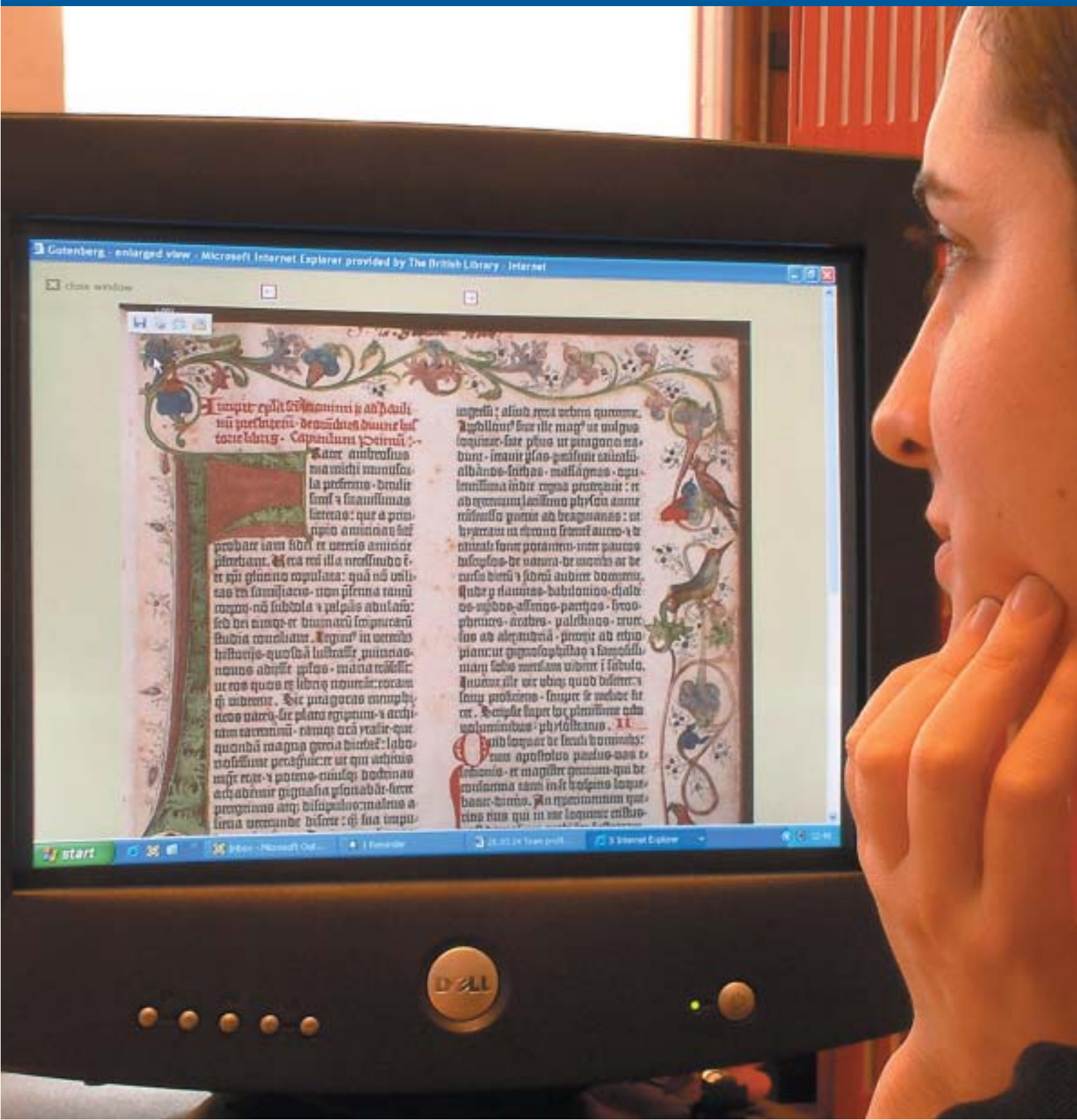
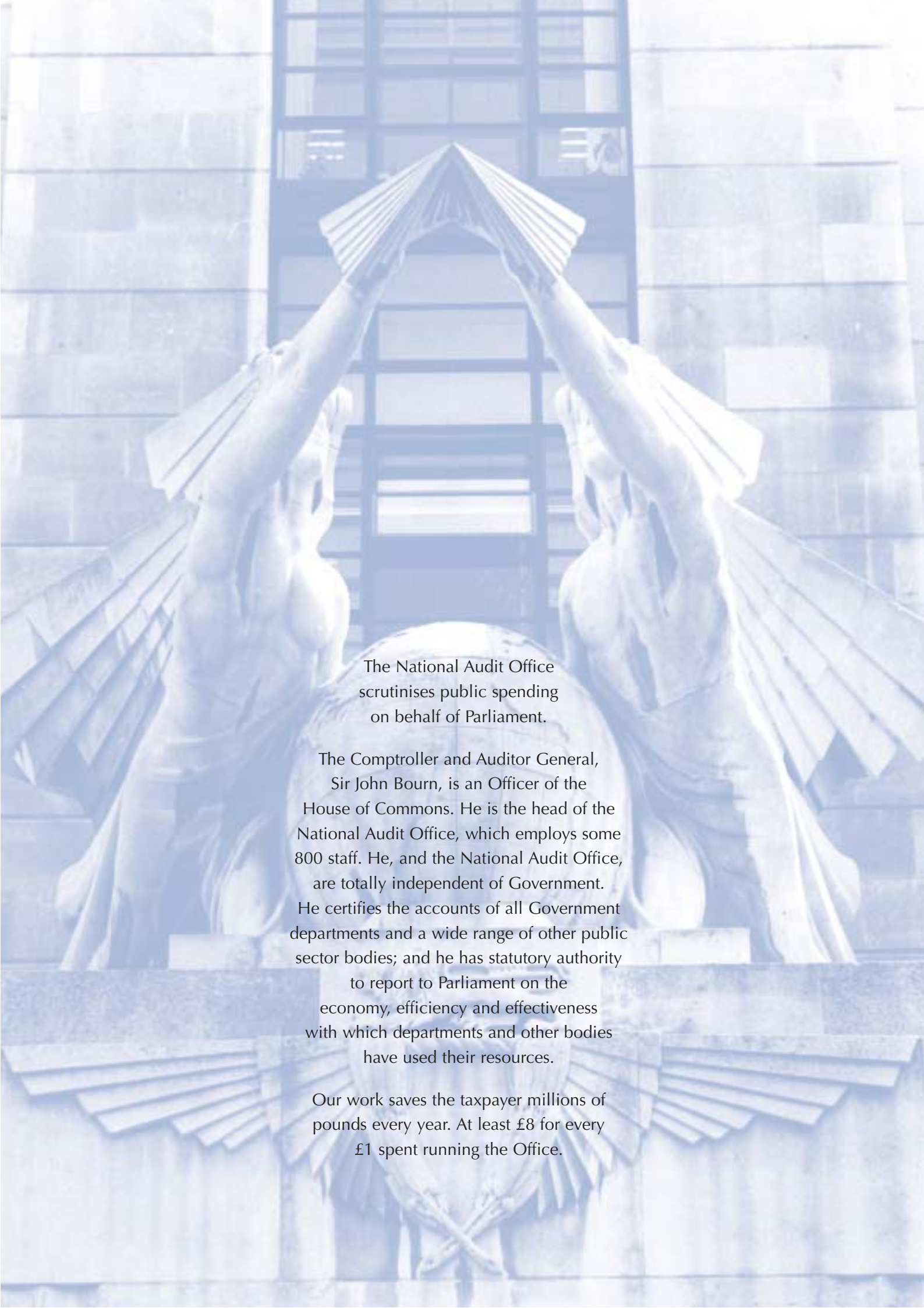
The British Library

Providing services beyond the Reading Rooms

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
HC 879 Session 2003-2004: 28 July 2004





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The British Library

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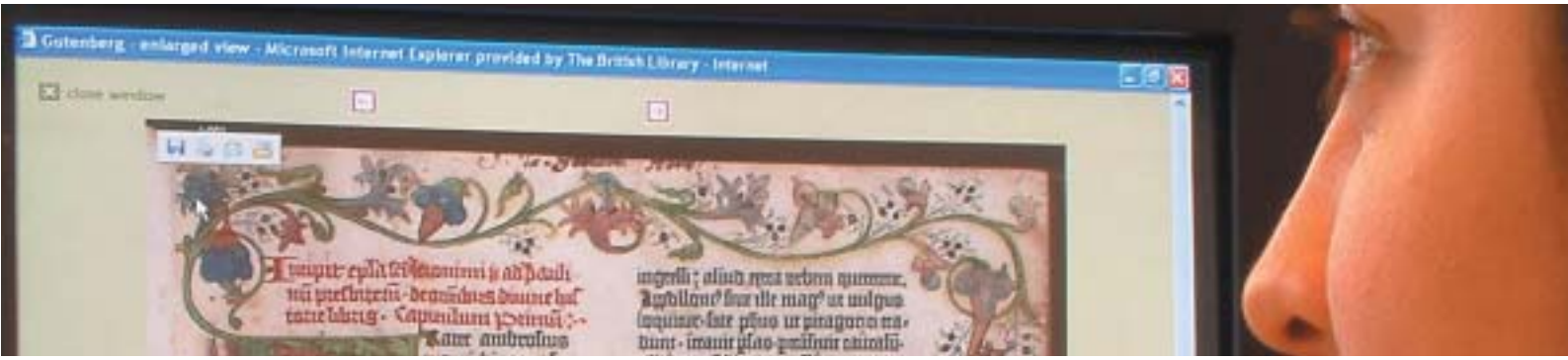

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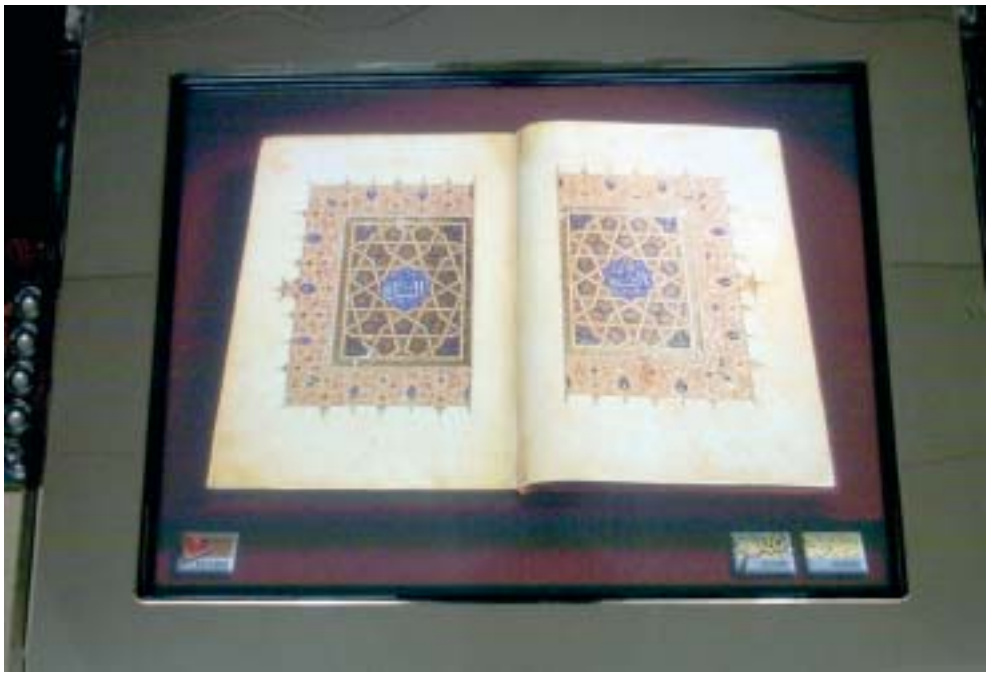
Photographs courtesy of the British Library

executive summary

1 The British Library ("the Library") is the national library of the United Kingdom and is sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It had a turnover of £121 million in 2003-04 which comprised £89.3 million in grant-in-aid[1] and £31.4 million in income from other sources.

2 The electronic age has opened up new possibilities for people to benefit from the Library's immense collection without needing to visit in person. This report focuses on the effectiveness of the services that can be accessed remotely, in particular the document supply service and those that are delivered through the Library's website, including the products of the Library's programme of converting material into digital form (known as digitisation - see Figure 8 on page 16). The report also covers some broader strategic and user communication issues that have an impact on the effectiveness of these remote services. It does not focus on the other services provided within the Library's reading rooms at St. Pancras, Colindale and Boston Spa.



3 **Figure 1** (page 2) shows the range of services provided to different user groups nationally and worldwide. To illustrate the scale of the remote services: in 2002-03, 2.76 million items were supplied by the Document Supply Centre, and 2.3 million "unique hosts"[2] visited the Library's website.

1 Of which it earmarked £6.2 million for investment in modernisation.
2 "Unique hosts" can be used as an approximate measure for the number of individuals visiting a website.

1 The British Library's services

User Group	Onsite Services	Remote Services
Research		
Higher education	Reading Rooms	Library catalogues on the web
Government	Bookshop	Subject resources
Writers	Publishing services	Document Supply services
		Online bookshop and publishing
		Virtual reference library
		Bespoke research services
		Web resources
Business		
High research and development	Reading Rooms	Library catalogues
Technology-based small and medium enterprises	Advisory services	Document Supply
Creative and media industries	Patent services	Science, Technology and Medicine information services
Science parks	Conference Centre/Corporate services	Reprographics
		Bespoke research services
Library and Information sector		
Higher and further education libraries	Reading rooms	Bibliographic services
Public libraries	Training	Library catalogues
Health libraries	Visits	Document Supply
Government libraries	Exhibitions	Bespoke research
Other national libraries	Tours	Librarianship services
Special libraries (for example, membership, learned societies)		Virtual reference library
		Web resources
Education		
Teachers	Exhibitions	Education pages on the website
Secondary school students (UK wide)	School tours	Curriculum resources
Primary and secondary schools in inner city London	Bookshop	Online bookshop
		Web resources
Undergraduates		
Lifelong learners		
Further education colleges		
Public	Exhibitions	Web resources
	Events	Online bookshop
	Tours	
	Bookshop	

Source: National Audit Office

Key points on the strategic position of the Library

4 **The Library is trying to achieve a diverse range of objectives.** Through its Funding Agreement the Library has agreed to contribute to the strategic objectives of three Government Departments: Culture, Media and Sport; Education and Skills; and Trade and Industry. For DCMS, it is important that the Library promotes "wider understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of [its] collections to the general public, schools and lifelong learners" (one of five objectives set by DCMS for the Library - see paragraph 1.11 on page 9). This needs to be balanced against its other objectives, such as to preserve the national archive and to provide ready access for the researcher and business communities in order to underpin UK competitiveness and research excellence.

5 **The British Library operates in a complex environment.** One element of this is that within the United Kingdom there are two other national libraries (the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales) and two further 'legal deposit' libraries (Cambridge University Library and the Bodleian Library, Oxford). The British Library works in close co-operation with these libraries and with other bodies in the library and information sector, and this collaboration will need to continue if the Library is to address the many challenges posed by the electronic era.

6 **The Library has undergone significant and beneficial organisational change.** The Library is much of the way through a major reform programme and it is already clear that the changes will make the Library better able to meet the needs of users, including those accessing the Library's services remotely. The reform to the document supply services should also ensure that it has the flexibility to respond to changes in its volatile external environment, including a highly competitive market place.

Key points on the website and digitisation

7 **The Library is a front-runner among public bodies at ensuring that its website is accessible to people of all physical abilities.** It has consistently performed well in audits of accessibility, and overall its approach to ensuring that the site is accessible is robust.

8 **It has significantly improved the usability of its website in the last two years though some users still find it difficult to use.** While recent changes have made the site much more consistent and user-friendly, research among users has identified scope for improvement in terms of layout and usability. It is important that the Library continues with its programme of usability testing and ensures that users are thought about at all stages of design. We found that the Library follows good practice for maintaining its site.

9 **Digitised material has proved popular with user groups.** Data on numbers of users show that projects such as *Collect Britain* (with particular appeal to lifelong learners - see Figure 9 on page 17) and *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (with particular appeal in the North-East of England - see Figure 10 on page 17) have generated significant interest.

10 **The Library now has a more strategic approach to digitisation.** Initially, the conversion of parts of the collection into digital form was largely driven by external funding opportunities. However the Library now has a clear set of criteria that it applies to all proposals to ensure that all digitisation activity fits within its overall strategy.

11 **Access to digital material may be lost if there is no planning for sustainability.** Funding for digitisation is concentrated on the conversion of material into digital format, and has been provided through external sponsorship and funding. However, there are also costs associated with maintaining access to digitised materials and these will increase as the volume of material increases. If these cannot be funded, the benefits for remote users that were originally planned will not be sustained beyond the short term.

12 **Close co-operation between the major funders of digitisation and major digitisers (including the British Library) and other bodies involved in digitisation is important.** The absence of national oversight for digitisation creates a risk of incompatible technical standards, duplication of effort and failure to learn lessons. While we have found no evidence to date of this risk maturing, in view of the considerable investment of money, resources and human effort involved in digitisation projects, it is important that these risks are identified and managed.

Key points on the document supply service

13 **Document supply is a competitive and rapidly changing industry and the Library is responding well through modernisation.** It is forward-looking and is collaborating well to improve service delivery, though further opportunities for improvement are available.

14 **Most users are very satisfied with the Library's document supply service although they also highlight some areas for improvement.** Both our own research and the Library's customer surveys show that the service is held in high regard, particularly for its speed, customer interface and breadth of collection. The main area for improvement is that the service in general, and catalogue searching in particular, could be more user-friendly.

15 **The price of services has increased significantly in recent years and the way they are priced is complex and is not evident to users.** The price rises are partly due to increases in copyright charges (which are beyond the Library's control), but they are also a result of the Library taking steps to ensure the full cost recovery of the services against a background of declining demand for document supply. The system for setting prices is complex and users have limited knowledge of the basis for the fees they pay. It is reasonable for users to expect a more thorough explanation with respect to price increases.

Key points on customer research and communication

16 **The Library now has a good approach to seeking remote users' views and in general it communicates well with customers.** While some remote users still feel the Library could do more to facilitate dialogue and understand their needs, there is now an effective and appropriate range of mechanisms in place for this purpose. However, these could be improved and extended, and on one recent occasion the Library did not communicate a price increase adequately. The Library also needs to ensure that the financial and management information available on its customers reflects the rapid changes in its services and customer base.

17 **The Library's promotional information could be more targeted and specific, and more needs to be done to raise awareness of services offered.**

Recommendations

Library's website

i The Library should continue to improve the usability of its website in terms of clarity of information, labels and navigation (paragraphs 2.12 and 3.17).

Digitisation

ii When implementing proposals for digitisation projects, the Library should have a clear plan for assessing and managing the risk that further funding to secure longer-term access is not guaranteed (paragraph 2.23).

iii DCMS should include in its Funding Agreement with the Library and other relevant bodies in its sector a requirement that, where they are involved in digitisation, they should collaborate and share best practice with each other and with other Government departments (paragraph 2.26).

Document supply

iv There is scope for the Library to achieve some 'quick hits' with users in advance of its planned major systems changes without incurring significant cost. Possibilities include, for example, being more transparent about sources searched and replacing coding and abbreviations with plain English. Where users' concerns are likely to be addressed by new developments, the Library should make users aware of this, including the likely timescale in which changes will be made (paragraph 3.17).

v The Library should ensure that it assesses the financial impact of its pricing policy and price changes on key customer groups (that is, public libraries, university libraries, commercial companies, learned societies). This information should be presented as an annex to the pricing policy papers presented to the Library Board for approval. The information on price changes sent to customers should include (where appropriate) an illustrative example of what this might mean for a typical customer (paragraph 3.28).

vi The Library should provide clear explanation for the basis of prices for different customer groups on its website and in its pricing literature (paragraph 3.29).

Customer research and communication

vii The Library should complete the evaluation of the financial and management information available on its customers as soon as possible, identifying any necessary changes together with a timetable for their implementation (paragraph 4.5 and Figure 23, page 30).

viii The Library should undertake an evaluation of its programme of customer visits and the appointment of specific accounts managers for corporate and higher education customers. This should identify the lessons learned and the effectiveness of these initiatives in improving sales and use of the Library's products and services, and of raising customer awareness and satisfaction. Subject to the conclusions, the Library should consider whether there are cost effective ways in which it might develop closer links with customers in other parts of the library and information sector. These might include replicating aspects of the approach through telephone and electronic contact rather than in person (paragraphs 4.7 to 4.9).

ix The Library should provide more clarity in the labelling of its products and services to make these more comprehensible to the user, including clear concise information about what each will provide, to whom, and the difference between services that appear very similar in function (paragraph 4.18).

x The Library should consider what more can be done, for example through direct marketing and events, to raise awareness of the full range of its services (paragraphs 4.20 and 4.21).

Part 1

Strategic challenges for the British Library

1.1 In this chapter, we consider the British Library's remit and position in the library and information sector and comment on some wider strategic issues that have an impact on the service that the remote user receives.

The British Library's turnover in 2003-04 was £121 million

1.2 The British Library was constituted by the British Library Act, 1972. It is the national library of the United Kingdom and is home to one of the world's greatest collections, containing more than 150 million items, representing every age of written civilisation and every aspect of human thought. These collections cover manuscripts, printed matter, sound recordings and digital materials.

1.3 The Library acquires a substantial part of its collections through legal deposit[3]. In addition to this, the Library purchases published research from within the UK and around the world, and appropriate unpublished material in different formats. The Library also receives donations and long-term loans of material of significant importance.

1.4 The British Library is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). In terms of grant-in-aid, it is DCMS's third largest NDPB. In 2003-04 the Library had an income of £120.7 million **(Figure 2)**.

2 The British Library's income, 2003-04

Source	£ million
Grant-in-aid[1]	89.3
Trading income[2]	25.4
Donations, legacies, and similar resources	4.0
Investment income	0.9
New Opportunities Fund[3]	1.1
Grand Total	**120.7**

NOTES

1 The Grant-in-aid includes £1.3 million from the *Invest to Save Budget* to support the modernisation of the Library's Document Supply Centre at Boston Spa as well as £3.4 million earmarked for re-structuring and £1.5 million reform money allocated by DCMS.

2 £17.4 million of this income came from revenues from the Document Supply Centre.

3 This relates to part of a National Lottery grant totalling nearly £3.285 million from the New Opportunities Fund for a specific programme of projects for the digitisation of learning materials.

Source: National Audit Office

3 *Under the United Kingdom Legal Deposit Libraries Act, 2003 and the Republic of Ireland Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000, publishers in the UK and Republic of Ireland have a legal obligation to send one copy of each of their printed publications (free of charge) to the British Library, within one month of publication. The UK deposit regulations also entitle the five other legal deposit libraries (National Library of Scotland, National Library of Wales, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Cambridge University Library and Trinity College Library, Dublin to claim (also free of charge) a copy of every published work. Under the terms of the Legal Deposit Libraries Act, 2003, legal deposit applies to non-print publications (for example, websites and CD-ROMs).*

The Library offers a wide range of services for its user groups

1.5 The Library categorises its various services in terms of its key user groups as shown in Figure 1 (on page 2). The Glossary provides further details of the Library's services.

1.6 The Library's services can be divided into those which are provided on site and those which are provided "remotely" without the user needing to visit the Library in person. The on-site services are provided through the reading rooms, primarily at St. Pancras, London, consisting of around 1,200 places for those with a need to use[4] the Library's collections. There are also facilities for readers at the Library's buildings in Colindale, north-west London, housing the newspapers collection, and at its complex in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, where the Document Supply Centre is based.

1.7 The main remote service is the document supply service in Boston Spa. Customers can order a reproduction or request a loan from the Library's huge collections of serials, books and other material devoted mostly to this purpose. The Library charges a differential fee for this service, depending on the type and standard of service required and the nature of the user (see Part 3 and the Glossary for further details on the document supply service). Other important remote services include those available on the Library's website, such as the British Library Public Catalogue (through which users can search the Library's huge collection remotely - **see Figure 3**); the Sound Archive and recordings; Images Online (the use of digital images from its collection); and its "Treasures" which enable users to access digitised images of some of the most precious items in the Library (see Figure 10 on page 17 for examples of these).

Our report focuses on services to remote users

1.8 Libraries all over the world deliver the majority of their services through reading rooms, supporting their users' needs by storing and retrieving relevant materials. In the case of national libraries such as the British Library, these are supplemented by a range of other functions, such as the bibliographic services for the library and information sector and, in a few cases, remote document supply services to support research and the national library network.[5] Some of these services arose from the mandate given to such libraries by their founding legislation, requiring them to act as custodians of their nation's intellectual and cultural heritage. The legal deposit status of these libraries made such services possible: they could not be provided to the same extent by other sorts of libraries and information providers.

3 Overview of services provided on www.bl.uk

The British Library's website (www.bl.uk) provides access to a range of services for its various user groups. Of these, the key services are:

- the British Library Public Catalogue[1];
- a range of digital materials, such as the scholarly International Dunhuang Project (see Figure 12 on page 18); items of general interest, such as the Treasures (see Figure 10 on page 17); educational materials for schoolchildren and lifelong learners.[2] A digitised newspapers collection, and the Collect Britain project (See Figure 9 on page 17) are currently being developed;
- online searching and means of ordering documents from the Document Supply Centre[3];
- information and services for librarians, such as bibliographic services;
- other online services, such as gateways to sites of scholarly or educational interest, current awareness.

NOTES

1 This provides access to the main catalogues, describing over ten million items available either in the Reading Rooms or for remote supply as photocopies or loans. It is the most widely used resource available on the website, with well over eight million searches conducted on it every year by librarians and researchers worldwide.

2 The Library's new Education Strategy is being developed and will emphasise the provision of interactive learning packages to help users develop a range of research skills for university or lifelong study.

3 Such as through the *Inside* service which enables customers to search for and order articles from the Library's collection of 20,000 research journals and 16,000 conference proceedings.

Source: National Audit Office

1.9 However, in recent years, a number of these remote services have been substantially challenged by the rise of the web and related technologies, in providing opportunities to improve on traditional models of provision, to reach out to a much broader range of users and to access a wider choice of material. While the traditional approach to the provision of information emphasised collecting and storing material in a single location for users to access physically, new technology means that organisations can now use the web to locate and manage access to electronic materials housed in disparate locations. Therefore, many new organisations are able to compete with libraries to provide information services without bearing the costs of maintaining large physical collections.

4 These are defined as those who "have reached a point in their research where no other library can adequately supply all the information required, can demonstrate a legitimate need to use the items in the collection to further their research needs or need access to the Library's public records" (British Library).

5 The few national libraries which provide document supply services, however, do not do so on the same scale as the British Library.

1.10 Our report concentrates on the effectiveness with which the Library is responding to these new challenges and opportunities. We have focused mainly on the Library's website, access to digitised images of parts of the Library's collection (see Part 2, and the overview of the services provided through the Library's website in Figure 3 on page 8) and the Document Supply Centre (see Part 3).

The Library's remit, and position in the sector, is complex

1.11 The British Library Act, 1972 gave the Library the remit to be a "national centre for reference, study and bibliographical and other information services, in relation both to scientific and technological matters and to the humanities". This remit has been interpreted by the Library and its sponsoring Department, DCMS, as working towards five objectives:[6]

i To ensure comprehensive coverage, recording and preservation of the national published archive.

ii To ensure broad UK coverage, recording and preservation of research material from overseas.

iii To provide ready access to the Library's collections and the world's knowledge base for the researcher and business communities to underpin UK competitiveness and research excellence.

iv To promote wider understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the Library's collections to the general public, schools and lifelong learners.

v To support the role of the national network of libraries in the UK and play an active role in the international network of libraries.

1.12 The Funding Agreement supports four of the DCMS's own strategic priorities, as well as objectives held by the Department for Education and Skills, and the Department of Trade and Industry. Being the national library of the United Kingdom, it is not surprising that the British Library provides services which fall under the purview of different government departments.

1.13 As an institution of high cultural and historical importance, and as a show-case of national treasures, the British Library has a role in contributing towards the achievement of DCMS's objectives, including its strategic priority to open up its "institutions to the wider community, to promote lifelong learning and social cohesion." This priority is also prominent in the strategic documentation produced by the Library. However, the Library needs to balance this against its objective "to provide access to the Library's collections…for researchers and business communities." In terms of the focus of the Library's efforts, an estimated 80 per cent of its work is in support of the higher education sector, business and industry. Every university in the United Kingdom makes use of the Library's services, while over 90 per cent of the top Research and Development companies purchase documents from the Document Supply Centre. Fifteen per cent of the Library's work is in support of public library activities and a smaller proportion goes towards services for the general public and lifelong learners.

1.14 In its strategy document, *New Strategic Directions* (published in 2001), the Library outlined its response to the challenge posed by the broadening access agenda by planning and implementing services for lifelong learners, secondary schools and the general public. The level of support for these user groups is less than for higher-end research and the services are different in type and scale, reflecting the realities of having to provide high quality research services for the United Kingdom. Without the Library as it is, universities would be forced to go to alternative suppliers for their research needs and this would add further costs to the higher education sector.[7]

1.15 The British Library operates within a complex environment. Though it is the national library of the United Kingdom, it is not the only national library within the country (Wales and Scotland have national libraries, while England does not) nor is it the sole legal deposit library. In some other countries with similar systems of government, such as Australia and Canada, there is a difference in status between the national library which collects a comprehensive national collection through its legal deposit status and the state or provincial libraries which house collections in support of regional aims and needs. While their national libraries exercise a monopoly over preserving their country's published archive, the British Library's statutory role overlaps in part with the other legal deposit libraries.

6 *Source: Three Year Funding Agreement (2003-06) between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Library (published 11 September 2003).*

7 *Report of the Research Support Libraries Group, February 2003 - see paragraph 3.3 and footnote.*

1.16 The library and information sector faces a number of challenging issues in the electronic era (for example, digitisation, digital preservation and the opportunities these give to make material accessible to all). Many of these will need to be addressed through collaboration and a joint approach to common issues. Bearing in mind devolved responsibilities, it is important that the three national libraries work through the specific issues relating to UK-wide versus home country roles that the electronic era poses, so that the benefits of their close collaboration can continue to be felt.[8]

The British Library has undergone significant and beneficial organisational change

1.17 The Library faces a number of strategic challenges in several areas and is responding well to them. In order to do so, the British Library has had to undergo a number of significant organisational changes in recent years. This was based upon the recognition that the existing organisational structure, values and style of operating were not delivering a level of service appropriate to the electronic age.

1.18 This change agenda is supported by DCMS, which oversees its implementation through the Human Resources Reform Agreement (2003-06).[9] The programme will cost £12.5 million in total, with DCMS providing support of £2.3 million in funding over the first two years of the Agreement and earmarking £3.4 million from its grant-in-aid in 2003-04: the British Library Board has allocated the same amount from its grant-in-aid in each of the remaining two years of the Reform Agreement.

1.19 We have conducted a high-level assessment of the Library's management capacity against relevant parts of the EFQM Excellence Model.[10] Our conclusion is that, bearing in mind that the Library's reform programme is not yet complete, the Library has carried out significant changes in order to become performance-driven, and to improve its customer focus, service-orientation and responsiveness to external pressures. As **Figure 4** shows, the Library's users have benefited from greater organisational focus and joint-working, while staff have both welcomed senior management's willingness to communicate more and involve them in the Library's strategic direction and values, and have appreciated being entrusted with extra responsibility through flatter organisational structures and the need to respond quickly and flexibly in a competitive market place.

8 There are already a number of examples of collaboration between the legal deposit libraries and other libraries and organisations within the sector, such as the Consortium of University Research Libraries and the Digital Preservation Coalition. Our research identified several other issues which could be addressed through collaboration, including the need for guidelines on common standards for digital library infrastructure and a common framework within which libraries can plan digitisation activities (see also paragraph 2.26 and recommendation 3).

9 This Reform Agreement contributes in part to DCMS's Public Service Agreement Modernisation Target, which is to "improve significantly the value for money of the Department's sponsored bodies, measured by a matrix of NDBP indicators".

10 The EFQM Excellence Model is a self-assessment tool used by organisations (in both the public and private sectors) worldwide "to measure where they are on the path to excellence". It is an holistic model which aims to help organisations to deliver sustainable business excellence. EFQM estimates that the Model is used by over 20,000 organisations. In this case we have used the model more narrowly to assess the Library's management capacity rather than its business excellence as a whole. See the Appendix for further details.

4 The Library's management capacity

Leadership and Unity of Purpose

Before the Executive Team was restructured in 2001 (and reduced from 11 members to seven), it was characterised by competition between directors for resources and lack of co-operation. This filtered down through the organisation, in that operational silos existed between directorates and this had a material impact on service delivery.[1] The new Executive Team is more cohesive and driven by the same objectives, which came out of the Library's *New Strategic Directions*. This document outlined a new strategy for the Library and was the result of an extensive consultation exercise both within and outside the Library. Since then, senior management have made presentations to staff and have been open to feedback and constructive criticism about the Library's direction and vision. While there are those in the Library who have been hesitant about endorsing the new vision, the fact that it has been fully explained and justified and the views of staff have been aired means that it is harder to oppose. This has increased the sense of ownership of the Library's vision and strategy.

People Involvement and Development

In the past, some Library staff felt that they were over-managed and were not trusted. One of the reasons for this was that the Library had a "can't do", risk-averse culture, where even trivial changes to administrative practices had to be approved by line managers. The Library has now removed several layers of middle management in order to make its internal structures flatter, and to enable the organisation to respond more quickly to changes. The flatter management structure means that staff are entrusted with more responsibility and the feeling is that the working ethos has shifted to a more service-oriented culture. Staff also have more involvement with the development and trialling of new services and methods of working.

The Library has also developed an effective internal communications system, which is run by a dedicated communications team. It produces a fortnightly publication, "Shelflife", which informs staff about what is going on in the Library. Senior management are open to constructive criticism and feedback from staff, and make periodic presentations to explain new services or other developments. The Library also conducts surveys in which staff can air their concerns. The data from this provide evidence that the Library's employees feel that the organisation is more inclusive and that they are more involved now than in the past. This involvement increases the pride of staff in what the organisation achieves because they can see how their work contributes to the services which the Library delivers.

Continuous Learning and Knowledge Sharing

The Library's Directorates used to be characterised by separation which was reflected at the Executive Team level and which hampered effective service delivery. Senior management has made a concerted effort to break down operational silos. On the one hand, it helps that they have a clear vision and have articulated this through clear corporate priorities. This means that staff are aware of how their daily activity fits into a greater whole. On the other hand, there is now an emphasis on providing the customer with a single user interface. This means that, internally, the Library has to co-ordinate activity which creates better working relationships across directorates. This includes sharing expert staff with other directorates on discrete programmes of activity. According to some of the staff that we interviewed, it used to be the case that customers were aware of the internal workings of the Library and knew where they could expect a reduced level of service because of internal problems. Greater internal co-operation has been perceived positively by users, who have commented that the Library is now much more focused on delivering relevant and high quality services to meet their needs.

NOTE

1 For example, it took significantly longer to order, through the Document Supply Centre, reproductions or loans of items held in London against those held in Boston Spa. This differential was due to operational inefficiencies caused by the fact that the two parts of the Library operated as separate entities.

Source: National Audit Office

Part 2

The quality of the British Library's remote services: Website and Digitisation

2.1 In this chapter, we examine the effectiveness of the services which users receive through the Library's website and digitisation projects.

2.2 For many users, the British Library's website is the only practical means of contact with the Library. Thus it serves the same function as customer-facing staff in the reading rooms in that it needs to represent the professional values for which the Library stands, such as being service-oriented, customer-focused, innovative and dynamic.[11] This function affects the design of the website, as sites structured without a view to the expectations or needs of users can create the impression that the organisation does not value them. In addition,

> "users are extremely goal-driven and look only for the one thing they have in mind…if a page does not appear relevant to the user's current goals, the user will ruthlessly click the Back button after two to three seconds."[12]

This means that poorly-designed sites will not experience the usage that perhaps the underlying services deserve.

2.3 Our analysis of the British Library's site focused on the two major elements of good site design: accessibility **(see Figure 5)** and usability **(see Figure 6 on page 14)**. We also followed up on feedback provided in our interviews and focus groups.

The British Library has a good approach to accessibility

2.4 The British Library has consistently performed well in audits of accessibility.[13] The National Audit Office report *Progress in Making E-Services Accessible to All - Encouraging Use by Older People*[14] commissioned an audit of 65 government websites against specific accessibility criteria. This included the British Library's website. The report found that "many government websites have so far achieved reasonable levels of accessibility but there is still more that many bodies can do." Of the 65 sites, 22 were identified as "front-runners", meeting over 60 per cent of the criteria stipulated in the report. The British Library was one of these front-runners.

5 Definition of accessibility

The accessibility of a website refers to the ability of the user to access all parts of the site (and the services provided through it) regardless of physical disability. Disabled users now have available a range of software and hardware products to enable them to use the internet (for example, text-to-speech browsers which read out the content of web pages for partially-sighted or blind users). This means that the sites they access need to be designed to support the use of these aids, and are therefore "accessible".

A site can be made accessible through conformity to a set of principles of good design which are stipulated by the World Wide Web Consortium (also known as the W3C).[1] In the United Kingdom, the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) offers a commercial consultancy service, auditing websites for accessibility based upon these principles. Sites which are compliant with the principles of accessibility earn the *See It Right* logo, and where they are not RNIB makes specific recommendations which the organisation can implement in order to earn the logo.

NOTE

1 The World Wide Web Consortium is an international consortium of commercial companies and public bodies, including technology producer and user organisations, that defines the technologies that constitute the World Wide Web with the aim of helping the web realise its full potential. To this end, it develops interoperable technologies (specifications, guidelines, software and tools) and is leading the Web Accessibility Initiative, which promotes and provides guidance on web accessibility.

Source: National Audit Office

11 *Source: Human Resources Reform Agreement (2003-6) between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the British Library - Progress Report, October 2003.*

12 *Jakob Nielsen (2000) Is Navigation Useful? <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/200000109.html>*

13 *We have not attempted to conduct another audit of the Library's website. We feel that it is more useful to ensure that the evolving website will continue to improve in terms of accessibility over time. This is particularly important as the pace of innovation on the web is rapid and criteria for accessibility have to evolve to keep up with new technologies. Therefore, we have examined whether the Library's approach to ensuring accessibility is sound.*

14 *(HC 428, 2002-3).*

2.5 The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) conducted two audits of the Library's website. The first was carried out in May 2002, and made 12 recommendations and two further (non-essential) recommendations for the British Library to implement. The site was re-audited in June 2003 when RNIB concluded that the British Library would need to deal with seven remaining issues before it could qualify for the *See It Right* logo.

2.6 Nonetheless, the second audit recognised that "much work has been undertaken to improve the accessibility of the site" since the original report in 2002. Of the outstanding issues, the Library told us that five can be resolved easily with a few days' additional work, while the other two issues - though much more complicated to deal with - are not major barriers to accessibility. The Library plans to deal with these when the website undergoes its next major re-design in 2005.

2.7 The process of improving the accessibility of a site is difficult; it is easier to ensure that all pages created in the future are accessible than it is to convert pages that have already been created retrospectively, particularly with large sites such as the Library's. While the Library acknowledges that it will be some time before the pages already created on the site will be fully accessible, it already has in place mechanisms to ensure that all newly-created pages are accessible. Pages have to meet broad criteria before they can "go live" on the site. At the design stage, those in charge of creating the pages are in touch with the Library's central Web Services Delivery Unit to work through potential accessibility problems.

The Library now has a good approach to usability, though some users still find the site difficult to use

2.8 The Library commissioned an external review of the usability of its website in 2002.[15] At that time, the review identified several general problems with the site:

- the site was not user-focused;
- the structure of the site could be improved;
- the site had an "inside-out" approach (that is, it was designed to reflect the internal structure of the Library rather than the needs of the external user);
- the site did not manage user expectations well;
- navigating the site was difficult and confusing;
- more could be made of the Library's 'Treasures';
- it was hard for a user coming to the site to know where to begin; and
- the site could be more consistent.

6 Definition of usability

The usability of a website refers to the ability of users to get to the parts of the site they want to visit. As users are goal-oriented, websites have to be designed with the user in mind, and need to present a clear path to the part of the site the user would want to get to. Usability is therefore the "softer" side of web design and cannot be achieved through meeting a set of technical standards. In order to achieve usability, organisations need to conduct research on what their users want and how they interact with the website.

Source: National Audit Office

2.9 The Library has made significant changes to its site since this review. It conducts its own usability focus groups and evidence from this suggests that the site is more user-friendly than before. An important feature of the new design is the set of "landing pages" which direct users from pre-defined user groups to a dedicated landing page which itself provides further links to relevant material (**see Figure 7** for an example of this). This conforms to best practice in web design, and gives the website a more "outside-in" structure, thus making it easier for individual users to find what they are looking for.

2.10 The Library has carried out a lot of work to make its site more consistent. This was achieved by ensuring that the look and feel of pages on the website are consistent with the Library's new brand identity, which was launched in 2002. While the purpose of having a brand identity goes beyond the website, this has improved the site significantly: users develop expectations about how to use a site from the way its top pages are structured. These expectations then affect the ease with which they can find what they are looking for at lower levels in the site. If the site is inconsistent, then these expectations are not met and this has an impact on usability. The consistency of a web site is particularly important for visually-impaired users, some of whom rely on text-to-speech browsers to read out what they are looking for.

2.11 In addition to re-structuring the upper levels of the site, the Library has also conducted several usability focus groups. In these focus groups individual users were asked to carry out certain tasks under observation. They were also asked to give their immediate impressions of the site, its layout and how useful they thought it was. The ease with which they could complete these tasks indicated how well the part of the site under scrutiny had been designed and suggested areas for improvement. The Library is developing expertise so that it can conduct usability focus groups in-house. It is also developing a review facility for the site as a whole, where a web expert will provide an outsider's perspective of the site over time. This will ensure that

15 *Tui interactive media, May 2002: The British Library: Content Organisation and Navigation Discussion.*

7 The British Library's website: the "landing page" for researchers

Source: The British Library

the site continues to move in the right direction as technology improves, and as users' behaviours change. These are all examples of ways in which the Library is now following best practice in web design.

2.12 However, despite the improvements in the design of the site, there was a general consensus in one of our two focus groups that the site's layout and usability needed some further improvement.[16] The Library's own research (through focus groups on usability) has also found that those unfamiliar with the Library struggle to interpret the labels for services offered on the site (see also paragraph 3.17). It is therefore important that the Library continues with its programme of usability testing and ensures that users are thought about at all stages of design - particularly in keeping the site as jargon-free as possible, lest users ignore links to potentially useful material (see recommendation 1).

2.13 Some of those we consulted also noted that Library's website is "occasionally out of date". While we did not attempt a comprehensive review of whether pages are up-to-date or not, we examined the methods by which the Library reviews and updates its website. We found that the Library's methodology for keeping the site up-to-date follows good practice for a site of that size (the site currently comprises 8,400 pages). Particular features of this good practice are:

- continual scrutiny by the central Web Services Delivery Unit of the top layers of the site;
- local maintenance of areas of the site relating to the work of particular departments (i.e. by people who know the content intimately and are in the best position to carry out this work);
- use of statistics to show which parts of the site are heavily used and are thus a priority for review; and
- the use of a link-checking service which examines all internal and external links on a weekly basis to find links which are no longer "live".

The Library has a well-established team of editors that are committed to carrying out this function properly.

2.14 We are satisfied that the Library has adequate systems in place to ensure that its site is up-to-date. We particularly endorse the commitment of the editors in addressing the challenges of updating such a large website, as a poorly-updated site can mar the reputation of an organisation needlessly, especially where the only contact with users is through the website.

16 *In addition, one of our interviewees suggested that most users of the website (other than librarians) would not be able to distinguish between the "Catalogues" and "Services" labels in the menu at the top of the Library's home page, even though this would be self-evident to library and information professionals. Participants in the Library's own usability focus groups also commented on the ambiguity of labels on the website.*

The Library now has a more strategic approach to digitisation

2.15 Users' perceptions of the website's content are significantly influenced by what is available in digital form. The Library's digitisation projects contribute to this **(see Figure 8)**.

8 What is digitisation?

Digitisation is the process of creating and storing digital images of a physical object. This allows people to access the object electronically and often remotely. The Library has a wide range of original objects that can be digitised such as books, journals, manuscripts, newspapers, maps, photographs, drawings, paintings, sound recordings, and microfilm. Objects that are created in a digital format, that never had an analogue form, are often called 'born-digital'.

Digitisation enables users that are unable, or would find it difficult, to access the Library in person to access some of the wealth of material and knowledge that the Library possesses. Conversely, it enables the Library to reach a range and size of audiences of users that it would not otherwise be able to accommodate.

Source: National Audit Office

2.16 Specifically, the Library sees digitisation as a way to:

- increase and enhance use of its collections by providing electronic, networked access, both to readers who visit the Library and to remote users (the *Collect Britain* project is a good example **(see Figure 9)**, as is the Library's Sound Archive);
- assemble digitised educational, cultural or scientific materials that are held by different, sometimes geographically remote, institutions into 'virtual' collections that have a combined value greater than their component parts (the *International Dunhuang Project* is a good example (see Figure 12 on page 18);
- help maintain and prolong access in the future by providing digital versions, where appropriate, thereby contributing to the conservation of original materials for future users where direct access is necessary; and
- generate income from those products with market appeal that can be exploited commercially by a partner, or the British Library itself, consistent with the aim of maximising accessibility to the collection. For example, *Images Online* enables instant access to, and purchase of, thousands of images from the Library's collections. The Library has also developed a program called *Turning the Pages*, which enhances access by combining interpretation and interaction with virtual versions of manuscripts, and is being marketed to other institutions **(see Figure 10)**.

2.17 The Library's approach to digitisation projects has changed. Up until 2001-02, the Library's digitisation projects had been largely driven by external funding opportunities. The individual projects were worthy enough in their own right but there was no strategic approach or direction. This meant that digitisation projects would not necessarily have made the best contribution to the Library's own priorities, such as broadening access, although we note that some projects (such as the *Lindisfarne Gospels/Turning the Pages* project) have had sustained impact. The Library told us that its approach to digitisation up until 2001-02 reflected its desire to gain a body of experience with digitisation projects, and that this provided valuable experience and knowledge on which to build a future strategy. Lessons learnt from these early projects include:

- the labour-intensive nature of digitisation;
- the need for knowledge of intended audiences to inform the criteria that determine the selection of material for digitisation;
- the need to ensure that each phase of digitisation projects, i.e. content selection, digitisation, content extraction and navigation/user interface, are adequately funded;
- the need for close co-ordination of digitisation projects and standards; and
- the need for sustainability.

As a consequence of its early experience, since 2001-02 the Library has developed and used a set of criteria against which all proposals for digitisation projects are assessed (**see Figure 11** on page 18).

The British Library is making an impact through digitisation

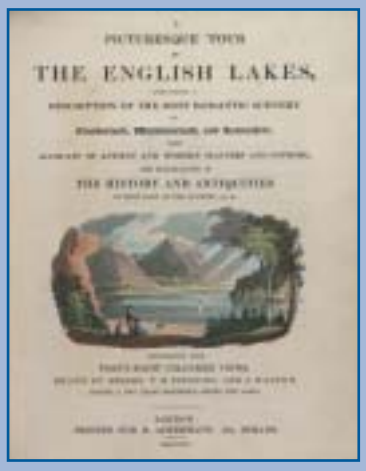
2.18 Use of the virtual collections appears to be strong. In terms of access by unique hosts (an indicator of the number of individual users), virtual exhibitions (such as 'Literary Landscapes' in *Collect Britain* - see Figure 9) were visited by an average of around 16,000 hosts each month during the period January - September 2003.

9 *Collect Britain* - digitisation widens access and audiences

Collect Britain is the Library's largest digitisation programme to date and will make around 100,000 maps, prints, drawings, photographs, documents and sound recordings freely available. Its main target audience is to lifelong learners. *Collect Britain* was publicly launched in October 2003 but will not be wholly complete until 2005.

In keeping with the national project, *Collect Britain* has strong regional and international themes running through its various projects, including:

- themed tours, such as 'The Old East End' which uses maps, drawings and eye-witness accounts to chart the growth of the East End of London;
- virtual exhibitions, such as 'Literary Landscapes' that uses contemporary views and maps to bring to life the topographical backgrounds to works by six famous classic authors, such as William Wordsworth's Lake District (right above) and Thomas Hardy's Dorset; and
- a wide range of collections, including 'Svadesh videsh: home from home' - a portrait of the Indian subcontinent using prints, drawings and photographs from the former Oriental and India Office (below).



Picturesque Tour of the English Lakes - published 1821

Chitpore Road, Calcutta - published 1867

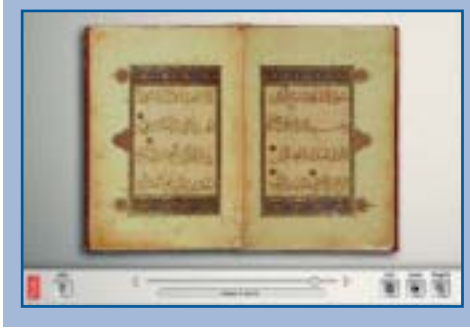
Collect Britain is funded by a New Opportunities Fund grant of almost £3.285 million, the majority of which is to meet the costs of digitisation. As a condition of the grant, the New Opportunities Fund requires the Library to provide continued maintenance and access to the *Collect Britain* site for three years from the date of the last grant payment.

Source: National Audit Office

10 *Turning the Pages* - digitisation providing access and income

Turning the Pages is an interactive program combining interpretation and access and enables viewers to interact with a virtual version of the original object such as a book or manuscript. Initially developed by and for the British Library in 1998, it is now being marketed as a service for institutions and private collectors around the world.

Turning the Pages allows visitors to virtually 'turn' the pages of manuscripts in a realistic way, using touch-screen technology and interactive animation. They can zoom in on the high-quality digitised images and read or listen to notes explaining the beauty and significance of each page. There are other features specific to the individual manuscripts. In a Leonardo da Vinci notebook, for example, it is possible to turn the text round so visitors can read his famous 'mirror' handwriting.



Four of the Library's 'Treasures' - the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Leonardo Notebook, the Sherborne Missal and Sultan Baybars' Qur'an (shown left) - are available in this format to remote users through the Library's website (11 of the Library's 'Treasures' are available in this format to visitors to the Library's exhibitions in London). Such web access has proved immensely popular - when Sultan Baybars' Qur'an went live the number of unique hosts (an indicator of the number of individual users) accessing its part of the website almost doubled, from around 63,000 in August 2002 to 125,000 in September 2002. The Lindisfarne Gospels, the Sherborne Missal and Sultan Baybars' Qur'an are also published by the British Library on CD-ROM and are available to remote users through its online bookshop.

Source: National Audit Office

11 The British Library's digitisation criteria

Proposals for digitisation projects are assessed in terms of:

- the likelihood of **widening access** to the collections;
- the likelihood of **reducing handling** of fragile originals;
- evidence of actual or potential **demand**;
- the development of a **critical mass**[1] of related material;
- the likelihood of **sustainability**;
- the extent to which dispersed material will be **virtually reunited**;
- the extent to which **cultural restitution** issues are addressed;
- the extent to which the Library's **service and property strategies** are supported;
- maintaining an appropriate **balance between public good** (freely available) **and commercial** (chargeable) **resources**;
- **minimising** the call upon Government **grant-in-aid**, to avoid drawing resources away from the Library's traditional core services;
- **avoiding duplication** with other digitisation programmes;
- minimising or **avoiding intellectual property right** issues.

NOTE

1 "Critical mass" refers to a coherent and comprehensive corpus of material for which the Library is recognised.

2.19 An example of the wider impact that the Library achieves through digitisation is the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. This manuscript is held to have great regional significance in North East England, its area of origin. Although the Gospels have been loaned for lengthy temporary exhibitions in the North-East on two occasions in the last eight years, public display at the Library's St. Pancras galleries in London has been the prime means of public access. However, some of the manuscript can now be viewed through the Library's website, and through the Library's *Turning the Pages* technology. The website also hosts a number of virtual seminars on the Gospels, a virtual tour outlining its creation, history, contemporary context and significance and a range of resources for use by schools in assemblies. On average, around 12,000 unique hosts a month access the Lindisfarne section of the website and between them view over 62,000 pages of information on the Gospels. The *Lindisfarne Gospels* resources were developed with the North East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (NEMLAC).

2.20 As part of an on-going closer working partnership, NEMLAC and the Library have also developed a separate website with links to other web-based resources on the Gospels and other places of significance to their history, particularly those related to the Gospels' region of origin, Northumberland (http://www.lindisfarnegospels.org). They have also jointly launched a new *Lindisfarne Gospels* educational resource box available to school children across the North East and are participating in other initiatives to provide access in the region to this great treasure.

12 The *International Dunhuang Project* - digitisation provides the only effective means of access

In 1900, around 40,000 Chinese documents were found in a cave near Dunhuang in Chinese Central Asia. Primarily historical documents not found anywhere else, they provide an important source of information on the history of Buddhism and religion, the development of papermaking and printing (the world's earliest dated printed book - AD 868 - was among the documents) and give glimpses into ordinary - rather than court - life. However, within 15 years the documents had been dispersed to institutions in London, St Petersburg, Paris and Beijing and have never been completely accessible to scholars since, not least because of incomplete cataloguing and the fragile state of many of the objects.

The *International Dunhuang Project*, begun in 1993, aims to create a widely available computer catalogue of all the manuscripts with images. It will be the only means to provide scholars with access to the entire collection, both those interested in the text and those interested in the object. It is a compelling example of how digitisation can enhance both the ease and breadth of access.

The Project is a major collaborative venture involving a range of partners and funders, such as the National Library of China and the Mellon Foundation. By 2010, 80 per cent of the material held by the British Library should be online.

Source: National Audit Office

2.21 Besides its success with the virtual exhibitions and related resources, the Library is also achieving scholastic impact with the digitisation of its collection (and the collections of others). One example of this is the *International Dunhuang Project*, a virtual assembly of documents that are dispersed in collections around the world (**see Figure 12**). By digitising the document fragments and making them available through the internet, the Library will provide scholars with a degree of access that was impossible before.

Remote users may lose out if there is no planning for sustainability

2.22 Digitisation represents a new area of activity for the Library, giving rise to the comment by the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee[17] that "the expansion of the British Library's role should not be at the expense of and should in no way compromise the performance of the British Library's core statutory functions". The Library is therefore committed to minimising digitisation's call on its grant-in-aid at current levels of funding, and given the need to maintain its core functions. The Library has been successful in finding external funding to convert analogue material into digital formats and some projects have a degree of sustainability built into them, at least for the medium term (*Collect Britain* is a good example of this - see Figure 9 on page 17). However, the Library will need to find funding to sustain digitisation projects, including *Collect Britain*, in the longer term.

2.23 As the mass of digitised material increases, so will the cost of sustaining it. If external funding or sponsorship cannot be found to sustain collections, then it is likely that access for remote users will be constrained.[18] Therefore, when implementing proposals, the Library needs to have a clear plan with regard to assessing and managing the risks associated with securing longer-term access (see recommendation 2). This risk is faced by all organisations involved in digitisation activities, and will continue to exist until sustainable business models for digitisation have been created.

2.24 The digital environment also presents new challenges in securing long-term preservation and access, where storage media can be short-lived and the range of digital material can be diverse. The Library has adopted a pro-active approach to this. It has produced its own digital preservation policy and a strategy framework, as part of its work with others in providing long-term preservation and access to digital material.[19]

Co-ordination of digitisation projects is important

2.25 The Library has developed its own criteria for digitisation and a policy for digital material preservation against a backdrop of other, wider, digitisation programmes (such as the New Opportunities Fund's *nof-digitise* project) and bodies with a wider perspective (such as the Joint Information Systems Committee - JISC - which works with further and higher education to provide strategic guidance on the use of information and communications technology to support learning and research). Both the New Opportunities Fund and JISC have helped to drive greater standardisation, particularly on technical issues.

2.26 However, there is a risk that different digitisers will adopt different technical standards. There is also a danger that projects develop in isolation or duplicate the work that is carried out by others. This is to the detriment of the remote user in that their access to materials could be limited, and the full value of electronic resources might not be realised.[20] While we have not found any evidence to date of this risk maturing, and note that the Library has worked within the standards framework stipulated by individual funders of projects (for example, the New Opportunities Fund and the Joint Information Systems Committee), in view of the considerable investment of money, resources and human effort involved in digitisation projects it is important that these risks are identified and managed. This can be achieved if the major funders of digitisation projects and major digitisers and repositories of digital materials, such as the British Library and many of DCMS's non-Departmental Public Bodies co-operate to resolve these issues in consultation with the sector more broadly. There is also considerable activity and experience in other Government departments and overseas which can be drawn upon[21] (see recommendation 3).

17 *Sixth Report: Public Libraries, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, HC 241: Session 1999-2000.*

18 *Because there are significant costs associated with maintaining the technology on which digital images are hosted, as well as with up-grading to newer technologies as the older become obsolete.*

19 *The Library has a policy document on Digital Preservation which will be regularly revised to ensure it reflects its developing role in the digital arena. The Library has also produced a digital preservation strategy report framework based on the Preservation Management of Digital Materials - A Handbook. The Handbook is maintained and updated on the website of the Digital Preservation Coalition, of which the Library is a founding member.*

20 *For example, through developing resources consciously to complement resources held elsewhere.*

21 *For example, the Library of Congress and the National Library of Australia have useful experience which is accessible through documentation freely available on their websites.*

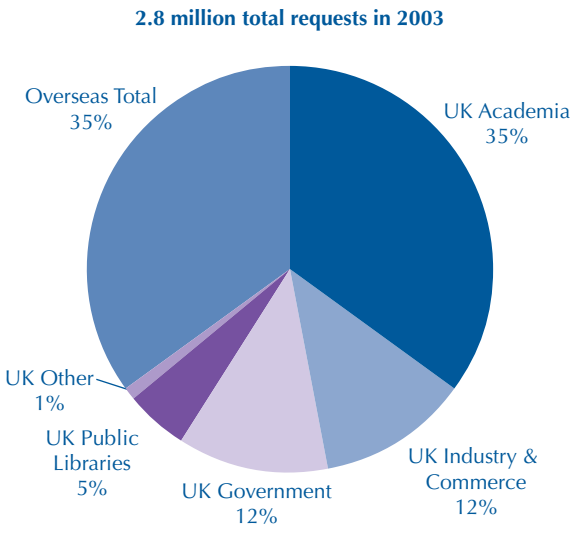
Part 3

The quality of the British Library's remote services: Document Supply

3.1 In this part of the report we examine users' experience and perception of the quality and pricing of the Library's document supply services.

3.2 The British Library collection is one of the largest in the world to be accessible through remote document supply. It includes journals, books, conferences, reports, patents, theses, translations, official publications, music scores and images. The Document Supply Centre provides around three million copies, loans and other document requests each year to researchers in all types of libraries throughout the world. Around a third of requests are from customers overseas, with a further third from the UK higher education and academic sector **(see Figure 13)**.

13 Volume of requests for document supply by sector, 2003



Source: National Audit Office

3.3 The Document Supply Centre is a critical part of the UK's library and research infrastructure. A Research Support Libraries Group report[22] concluded that: the Library's ability to garner and then provide research resources was important to the UK's research and development community, and for the UK's competitiveness in research and development; and that it was important that such research resources were cost effective against other providers. The report recognised that the volume and pattern of demand for document supply and inter-library loan was likely to change, but as a means of assuring access for all researchers to the largest number and broadest range of resources the Library was likely to retain an important role as service provider to the library and research communities.

The Library's document supply service faces many challenges

3.4 However, the Document Supply Centre now operates in a rapidly changing market, with libraries (particularly in higher education) now managing access to material of greater depth and versatility through licence agreements with publishers. These changes have come about because publishers have produced subscription packages, which have been made possible by the advent of the electronic journal. These schemes provide a library with access to all the journals of a particular publisher. They also give libraries more flexibility over the use of the material and improve delivery to the end user. The use of electronic information has had a particular impact in the fields of science, technology and medicine (STM), where speed and easy access to new developments are important characteristics. Nearly 70 per cent of document supply requests are from STM.

22 *The Research Support Libraries Group was established in 2001 by the four UK higher education funding councils, the British Library and the national libraries of Scotland and Wales to make recommendations for a UK wide strategic framework and co-ordinated delivery mechanism for research information. The Chair was Professor Sir Brian Follett. The Final Report was published in February 2003 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Its key conclusion is that the UK should create a new body (the Research Libraries Network) to develop, prioritise and lead a UK wide strategy for research information provision.*

3.5 As a result, the volume of requests received by the Document Supply Centre has fallen dramatically over the last five years - on average by more than five per cent a year. The most marked change has been in the industrial/commercial and public library sectors, where the volume of requests has fallen by 40 per cent since 1998; and the higher education sector, where demand is down by a third. In addition, increases in the prices of services offered by the Document Supply Centre (see paragraphs 3.18 to 3.22 and Figure 18, on pages 25 to 26) may have had some impact on demand.

The Document Supply Centre has responded well to competitive pressures

3.6 In order to continue to provide an effective contribution to the library and information sector, the Library is undertaking a major modernisation of its Document Supply Centre. In 2003-04, £1.3 million was provided for this from the *Invest to Save Budget* (see Figure 2, note 1 on page 7).

3.7 The first phase of this modernisation programme (outlined in **Figure 14**) means that the Library can now offer customers the secure electronic delivery of documents. This is based on "scan-on-demand" technology, whereby users can access from their desktop a high quality, scanned, electronic image of any item in the vast document supply collection. In addition, users can also obtain documents from the Library's own database of electronic journals (see paragraph 3.11) and the Library is developing features that will improve the way in which users make requests and track their progress online. These will complement the more powerful search tools currently being developed, which will help users locate and order materials from a wider base than at present.

The Library is forward-looking and is collaborating with others to improve service delivery

3.8 The Library is receptive to, and interested in, user developments and future plans. For example, from August 2003 the urgent action service has been offered as two separate premium services (the two hour or 24 hour service), available 23 hours a day, in response to feedback from users. The Library also offers a variety of means for ordering and receiving documents to facilitate users' different requirements.[23]

14 Implementing the modernisation programme

The implementation of the key system underpinning the modernisation programme (the Integrated Request Management Document Delivery System) is on track. Phase One delivered high speed digital document scanning and other technical enhancements that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Library's internal copying processes. These have been in operation since the middle of 2003 and were enhanced by the introduction of secure electronic delivery at the beginning of December 2003. A significant amount of testing and trialling was undertaken in 2003 on both aspects of Phase One. This helped to address the concerns of users and Library staff and minimise the problems experienced when the systems went live.

The Library is now working on Phase Two of the project to replace its 30 year old Automated Request Processing System. This will allow customers to track requests online (a stated user requirement). A prototype is expected to be ready by Autumn 2004.

Source: National Audit Office

3.9 In thinking about users' needs and how to meet them, the Library has established good working partnerships with experts and stakeholders in the sector. For example, the Library collaborated with Adobe to develop the software which underpins secure electronic delivery (and ensures that copyright regulations are not breached). To facilitate licensed access to the Library's extensive scholarly materials, and ensure that copyright laws are observed and rights holders are remunerated for their use, the Library is also collaborating closely with The Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, publisher groups such as the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers, and with individual publishers such as Elsevier and the Emerald Group. It is also working with hardware providers such as Relais, and with web-based retailers such as Amazon.co.uk.

3.10 A theme which emerged from our interviews with stakeholders was that there is interest among users in having electronic access to current and historical material held by the Library and other information providers (such as higher education and corporate libraries, learned societies and publishers). The higher and further education communities benefit from potential access to 4,500 of the latest electronic journals from key publishers, through arrangements negotiated by the UK's Joint Information Systems Committee **(see Figure 15)**. Document suppliers have already started to make current and historical manuscripts available in an electronic form, but there is scope for more work in this area through increased partnerships or other joint ventures.

23 For example, secure electronic delivery provides digitally scanned copies to users via the web (see paragraph 3.7 above). The Library also offers a Library Privilege (non copyright fee) service for certain customers such as those in higher education.

15 How joint working with publishers can provide electronic access for the user

The UK's Joint Information Systems Committee (funded by the UK further and higher education funding councils) has secured agreements with nine major international publishers providing potential access to around 4,500 electronic journals as part of a national initiative, called NESLi2, for higher and further education and the research communities. The terms of the agreements for 2004 vary between one and three years. Further discussions are taking place with eight new publishers, as well as some existing publishers, with the aim of increasing significantly the number of journals available electronically from 2005 onwards.

Source: National Audit Office

3.11 The Library is already looking at a number of these opportunities and developments are underway. For example, it is expanding its own database of electronic journals (ESTAR) with over 4,000 major titles now available: it has a target 8,000 for 2004-05.[24] It is also exploring the possibility of cataloguing and indexing theses electronically to meet the needs of users of the British Thesis Services, who would welcome electronic access to the full text of such materials.[25] The Library has a good working partnership with the publishing and information communities, as well as the technical infrastructure (high-speed, high resolution scanners and secure electronic delivery mechanisms), to make potentially almost the whole document supply collection available electronically.

3.12 In developing new products and services, particularly those to be delivered electronically, customers commented that the Library needs to ensure that it is familiar with the restrictions that may be in place on information technology systems used by customers. For example, some interviewees said that their security 'firewall' created problems. They also said that some of the newer products required them to have the latest software: some users would either not have this, or would be unable to download it, even where it was freely available over the internet. Knowing the technical constraints[26] that users work within can have a positive effect on the design of new products and services.

3.13 These are innovative ventures for the Library and it is critical that these new developments do not become expensive and unwieldy to manage. They must also complement and add value to the search and delivery services which are already offered (or are being developed) by others in this field. The traditional funding model for publishing and accessing scholarly research through journal subscription is also being challenged by the concepts of *Open Access and Open Archive*; with many new initiatives taking place in the information environment, particularly in higher education and specifically within the fields of science, technology and medicine **(see Figure 16)**. In response, the Library has expanded its in-house expertise and increased its involvement with developments in scholarly communications. It will be important for the Library to consider whether working in partnership is more cost effective and will provide greater opportunities than proceeding on its own.

16 Open Access and Open Archive initiatives

The UK's Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) is funding, for all UK higher education institutions, a fifteen month subscription to BioMed Central, an open access publisher, to enable more than 80,000 researchers to share findings freely with others. JISC is also supporting Open Access journal development in the Public Library of Science, the Institute of Physics, the International Union of Crystallography, and the University of Lancaster.

SHERPA (Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access) is a collaborative project, involving thirteen UK universities, to initiate development of openly accessible institutional digital repositories of research output in so-called 'e-archives'. Other institutional archiving initiatives such as DSpace, a software platform produced jointly by Hewlett Packard Laboratories and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and now being developed further in collaboration with Cambridge University Library and other institutions, will provide a repository for the management, preservation and dissemination of intellectual research output in digital format.

Source: National Audit Office

Most users of the Document Supply Centre are very satisfied with its services

3.14 The vast majority of our interviewees are very satisfied with the services received. The document supply service is held in high regard for its speed of service, customer interface and breadth of collection. Users feel that the different ways of requesting and receiving information adds extra flexibility and most find the systems easy and quick to use. The ability to go to a single source for everything is also a great benefit. These observations are also supported by the responses to the Library's own customer satisfaction surveys (see also Figure 23 on page 30).

24 *This programme is entirely dependent on the agreements that the British Library has successfully negotiated with the publishers.*
25 *This is compared to the current provision in paper or microfiche formats.*
26 *For example, operating systems used by the average user within a user community; internet browsers used; and access to non-standard technology to read special programs.*

3.15 The Library's Key Performance Indicators show that in the nine month period to December 2003, UK customer satisfaction was 83 per cent compared to a target of 80 per cent, and to a satisfaction rate of 82 per cent in 2002-03. More marked is the improvement in providing documents under the standard service within 48 hours. Between April and December 2003, 94 per cent of documents were supplied within 48 hours compared to a target of 90 per cent; this compared to a performance of 57 per cent in the six month period to the end of June 2002.

3.16 The Library's Copyright Office (based in Boston Spa) is also seen as very helpful in giving guidance and information to the library profession on copyright and document supply. This has been particularly valuable in the lead up to the changes in UK copyright law introduced at the end of October 2003.[27] A set of *Frequently Asked Questions* is now available on the Library's website, produced in collaboration with The Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd.

But selected groups of users identified scope for improvement

3.17 However, a number of suggestions for improvement were put forward by those we interviewed, and through the Library's own customer feedback, to help enhance the quality and accessibility of the document supply services available. We outline the key suggestions below, commenting on the feasibility of implementation, and any steps the Library is already taking to address these issues.

- **Transparency and consistency of sources searched**. One of the findings from our focus groups was that users perceive that there is a variable quality of service, for example when they request a standard location search for a document. Users would also appreciate more transparency about the sources the Library searches so that they can make an informed choice about purchasing this service (see recommendation 4).
- **Accessibility of services to non-librarians.** Not all users of the Library's document search and ordering services are professional librarians. The complexity and variety of services available, and the means of ordering and receiving documents, can be bewildering to the less experienced or knowledgeable. The coding and abbreviations used for its services can also be confusing, even among practised users. Simplification of these will have a positive impact on the usability and quality of the service (see recommendations 1 and 4).
- **Collection policy.** While the Library told us that their collections policy has not changed since 1987, some users in our focus groups (particularly among public libraries) perceived that there was less material available, for which there are shorter loan periods and longer waiting times. In view of this negative (and perhaps unfair) perception among users, it is important that the Library manages users' expectations through better information regarding its collections policies and any changes that take place in the future.
- **Loan periods.** In response to customer feedback, the Library instituted a new automatic renewals policy in April 2003 (where items are loaned initially for a period of three weeks and then renewed automatically for a further period unless requested by the user or returned by the customer). However, some of the users in our focus groups complained that this sometimes meant that they were penalised for late delivery of items. The Library is working closely with the higher education research sector to look at new ways of providing the best UK-wide approach to the inter-lending of books for this sector **(see Figure 17)**. The need for more collaboration between research libraries is also a key point made by the Research Support Libraries Group report (see footnote 22 on page 21).
- **Catalogue searching.** Librarians also have mixed views about the British Library Public Catalogue search facility, which some consider to be complicated, lacking in clarity and in need of significant modernisation. The Library has addressed this issue by installing an integrated library system to provide a single point of access for functions such as acquisitions, cataloguing, information retrieval and circulation control. Some 28 million bibliographic records are involved. This went live in June 2004. One of the themes which emerged from our focus groups was that the Library could be taking a lead to develop a more sophisticated user-friendly 'universal' search facility for the library sector as a whole, akin to the search tools developed for the internet. The significant costs involved make this an unrealistic expectation, which perhaps arises from the fact that the Library has become known for using leading-edge technology to provide some services. It is therefore important that the Library continues to manage the expectations of its users.

27 At the end of October 2003 the UK law of copyright changed as part of a harmonisation of the laws of copyright among EU Member States and to take account of electronic information and the Internet. Most significant is that any copying of material where the copy is to be used for commercial purposes will no longer be allowed as an 'exception' to copyright (such as with fair dealing and library privileges).

17 Inter-lending by the higher education sector

A report was commissioned by the Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL), with the support of the British Library Cooperation Partnership Programme, to look at and recommend the best UK-wide infrastructure and associated business models for the inter-lending of books in the higher education research sector over the next ten years. The report did not consider the needs of other sectors (such as public libraries) but the recommendations are unlikely to have any adverse implications for them.

The report was published in May 2003 and has received a broadly positive response from those that would be affected by its implementation. The British Library is now working with representatives of CURL to establish a steering group with other key partners to take the work forward.

The key feature is that the British Library should form a consortium with a range of partner libraries who would agree to provide book inter-lending services to defined standards and charges. The consortium could invite into membership any library it wished, but the focus should be on participation by those which house unique research collections. The service would be explicitly customer orientated with a single on-line routing, via the British Library Document Supply Centre, for all inter-library lending.

Source: National Audit Office

Recent document supply price increases have been criticised by some groups of users

3.18 The Library has had to respond to a decline in demand for document supply while its own costs have risen. Some of the increased costs, such as changes in copyright licensing rules or copyright fees (levied by the Library on behalf of the publishers), are beyond its control and can be substantial. For example, the average copyright fee charged for current serials is around £7.50 per extract, though it can range from £1 to £30. **Figure 18** shows the changes in the Library's own prices for document supply services since 1999.

3.19 There was dissatisfaction among certain users, particularly public libraries, about the change in pricing portfolio introduced for the standard service in October 2000, when separate price charges were introduced for copies, loans, location searches and loan renewals, replacing a uniform charge. The change was primarily introduced so that prices could be brought more into line with the cost of providing the individual services. For example, the cost to the Library of providing a returnable loan is considerably more than the cost of providing a non-returnable copy.

18 Document supply prices, 1999 to present

Price[1]		UK Copy	UK Loan	UK Location Search	UK Loan Renewal
1999-2000	All sectors	£4.53	£4.53	No charge	–[2]
April 2000	All sectors	£4.67	£4.67	No charge	–
October 2000	All sectors	£3.80	£6.20	£3.90	£2.00
April 2001	All sectors	£3.91	£6.39	£4.02	£2.06
August 2002	Public Good[3] Commercial	£3.99 £7.00	£6.65 £10.00	£5.00 £5.00	£2.50 £2.50
August 2003	Public Good Commercial	£4.10 £7.20	£6.85 £10.30	£5.15 £5.15	£2.60 £2.60

NOTES

1 The figure quoted excludes the copyright fee.

2 Before October 2000 requests to renew were treated as a new loan and charged accordingly

3 The "public good" sector consists of libraries in the higher education, government and health sectors as well as public libraries. The prices of services supplied to this sector are made net of the contribution the sector collectively makes towards the costs the Library would otherwise incur on certain programmes or activities associated with its work (see Figure 21 on page 27).

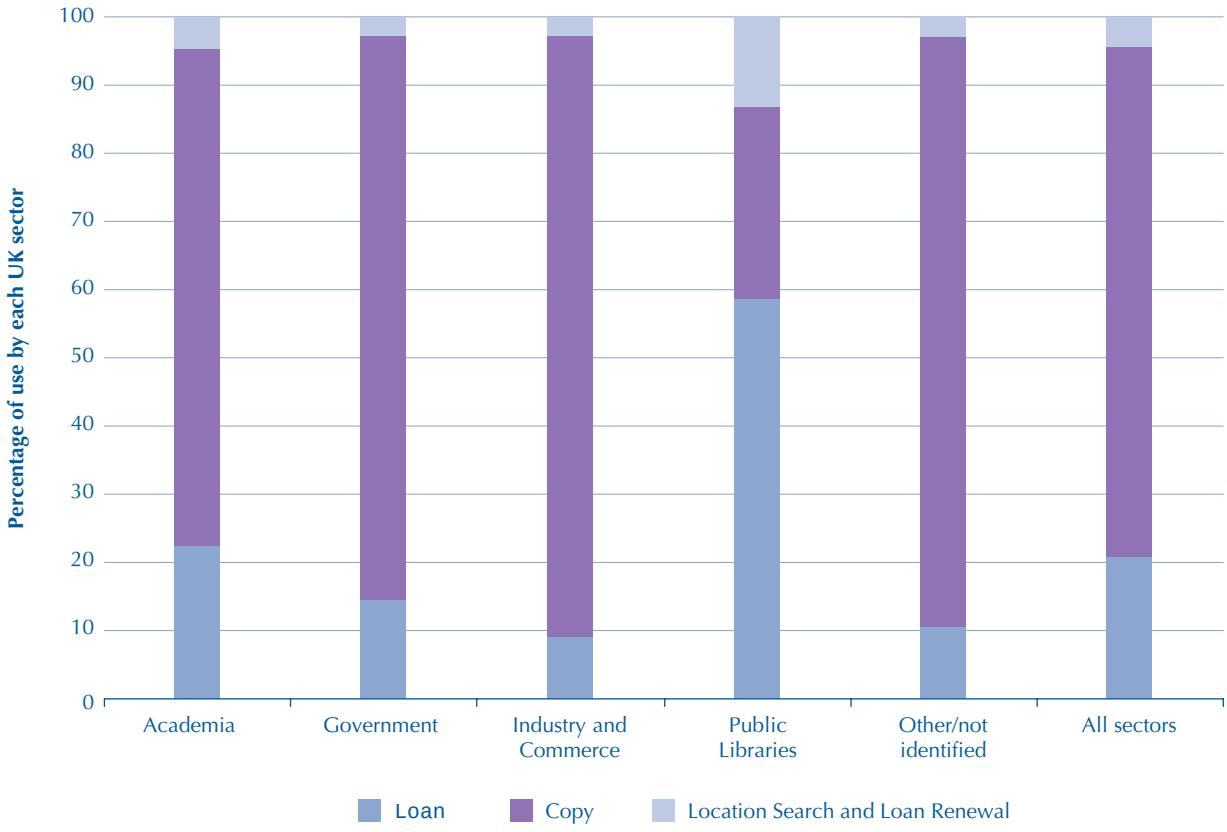
Source: National Audit Office

3.20 As a consequence of this change, the price of copies decreased by 16 per cent and the price of loans increased by 37 per cent, with location searches and renewals being charged for the first time. As a proportion of the standard service, public libraries request loans more than copies and also undertake a significant number of location searches, so the October 2000 changes had more impact on them **(see Figure 19)**.

3.21 The prices introduced in October 2000 were insufficient to allow the Library to recover the full costs (including overheads) of its UK standard services. With costs rising and demand declining the Library introduced a significant price increase as soon as possible (in August 2002) to address this.

3.22 Many librarians (particularly in the higher education sector) also criticised the significant rises in the costs of the Urgent Action (two-hour) Service and world-wide searches, introduced in August 2003. The cost of the former went up from £13.49 to £20.00, while the latter now costs £35 plus the cost of the item supplied (if found): this is compared to a cost of £23.50, if found and supplied as a copy; £37.50 if supplied as a loan; £10.50 if the search failed. Under the terms of the pricing policy approved by the Library's Board these are premium services charged at market rates, above full costs, to maximise contribution to general overheads.

19 Profile of "standard" services used by each UK sector, 2002-03[1]



NOTE

1 The graph does not compare absolute demand for standard services between UK sectors: rather, it compares the use of standard services within each sector relative to other sectors.

Source: National Audit Office

20 Policy for pricing of document supply services

Category A1	Uncharged services, wholly or partially supported by Grant-in-Aid (for example, the reading rooms, bibliographic services);
Category A2	Charged services, partially supported by Grant-in-Aid (for example, priced exhibitions).
Category B	Services charged at full cost, including overheads (for example, UK remote document supply standard services, Library tours).
Category C	Services charged at market rates, above full cost, to maximise contribution to general overheads (for example, UK value-added/premium services and overseas services).

Source: British Library

The Library's approach to pricing is complex and is not evident to users

3.23 The Library's policy on charging for its services is agreed with the Treasury and DCMS, with prices being set in accordance with Treasury guidance[28] and approved by the Library's Board. The policy for pricing of document supply services is illustrated in **Figure 20**. Details about the charges to be made for individual services are provided on the Library's website and in Customer Updates sent to registered users. However, this is not supported by clear explanation of the basis of the prices.

3.24 The setting of prices is underpinned by the Library's costing system. We found this system to be robust and effective at capturing all relevant costs. Regular price sensitivity reviews and monitoring are also built into the system. The Library's move to a new database in 2004-05 will help improve its price modelling and monitoring further.

3.25 The pricing model is, however, highly complex. As well as the cost of providing a service, the Library aims to set prices in a way that protects customers from dramatic price changes (for example, searches are still heavily subsidised as they were not charged for until 2000), and allows the Library to adjust for any under-recoveries in the previous year. To achieve this, within the standard service the Library makes a number of accounting adjustments. One of these adjustments involves the "public good" sector[29] receiving a discount on the copy service to take account of the contribution the sector collectively makes to the costs the Library would otherwise incur on certain programmes or activities associated with its work **(see Figure 21)**. This is all in line with Treasury guidance, though the various accounting adjustments made to the different components of the standard service are complex and unclear to customers.

21 Illustration of how the "public good" subsidy works

SUNCAT is a project to develop a national union catalogue of serials held in research libraries throughout the UK. £700,000 in funding is being provided over two years by the Joint Information Systems Committee and the Research Support Libraries Programme (funded by the higher education funding councils). The British Library is part of the SUNCAT Steering Committee and is incurring the costs of contributing the British Library data to the SUNCAT database, as are higher education institutions with the addition of their data. In determining its prices for the "public good" sector the Library is taking account of the contribution made by the higher education sector to this work during the period of the funding. In 2003-04 this contribution reduced the total cost the Library aimed to recover from "public good" customers by £350,000 with a consequential reduction in the unit price of copies by about £0.40.

Source: National Audit Office

28 *H.M. Treasury's Fees and Charges Guide.*
29 *See Figure 18, note 3 on page 25.*

22 Analysis of estimated cost recovery from public libraries by service in 2003-04

	Copy £	Loan £	Search £	Renewal £	Total £
Full cost	169,000	415,000	143,000	12,000	
Recovered through pricing	150,000	447,000	64,000	7,000	
(Under)/Over recovery of cost	(19,000)	32,000	(79,000)	(5,000)	**(71,000)**

Source: National Audit Office

3.26 The net effect of the accounting adjustments is that in 2003-04 the unit price of copies, searches and renewals for the "public good" sector was lower than required to recover the full costs incurred by the Library in that year, while the unit price for a loan was set £0.49 higher than the full cost calculation. The estimated impact of this on public libraries is shown in **Figure 22**.

3.27 We found that public libraries had little awareness of the large benefits they receive from the subsidies on searches. However, they are concerned about the price of the loan service which they consider to be a disincentive to the borrowing of books and makes it difficult for public libraries to aspire to the vision which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has proposed, to make any book available to anybody anywhere.[30]

3.28 We do not think the Library has previously done enough to appraise the impact of its pricing policy and respective price changes on its key user groups. As a result of our discussions with the Library, some analysis of the impact of prices by sector was presented to the Board in March 2004 (see recommendation 5).

3.29 The Library considers that its pricing policy is appropriate both within the market place and under Treasury guidance. The Library has acknowledged that its prices are presented to customers in an overly complex way and, from August 2003, simplified its pricing tariff significantly. This provides greater harmonisation of the many prices in use, regardless of delivery channel. However, this does not address the complexity of the Library's internal pricing model for its standard service which is also in need of review and simplification. We found that while the adjustments made are within Treasury rules, they are difficult to follow or explain with any clarity. It is reasonable for users to expect a more thorough explanation of the Library's pricing policy, including the rationale and criteria used in determining prices for both "public good" and other customers (see recommendation 6).

30 *Framework for the Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, February 2003: "anyone seeking a book can be guaranteed to get access through the library whether or not it is still in print" (p.51).*

Part 4

User research and communication

4.1 This chapter looks at how well the Library communicates with its remote users and obtains feedback from them. We also assess the Library's effectiveness in promoting awareness of its remote services.

Overall, the British Library now has a good approach to seeking remote users' views

4.2 The Library now has a good system for identifying and focusing on the challenges of an increasingly competitive environment, including having better relationships with remote customers and using a variety of means to obtain their views. The Library makes good use of these when prioritising services and designing and developing new products. **Figure 23 on page 30** lists the main channels through which information about users' views and their needs are communicated regularly to the Library.

4.3 The Library also conducts a programme of wider market research to find out specific information about its users and potential users. This research will be very useful as the Library positions itself in markets which it has not traditionally served. Examples of research which has already taken place include a non-user review, and awareness and education surveys.

4.4 In addition, the Library is currently trialling a Customer Relationship Management system to record and monitor customer calls and information to help improve the effectiveness of service delivery. Key to the success of such processes is that they are applied to the business as a whole and do not add to staff workloads or create other difficulties.

4.5 The Library also holds a wealth of information on the value, volume and performance of its services and resources, including information on each customer sector. The Library has recognised that its financial and management information needs are changing as a result of its internal modernisation programme, an evolving product base and the changing needs and types of customer, and has initiated reviews to evaluate its requirements - including a review of its customer surveys (see recommendation 7).

In general, customers now feel that the British Library communicates with them effectively

4.6 All of the Library's stakeholders endorsed its new inclination for dialogue, openness and co-operation, and emphasised the important role it has in facilitating and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders. Earlier we identified ways in which the Library can build upon this good reputation (see paragraphs 1.16 on page 10 and 2.26 on page 19).

4.7 Corporate and higher education customers of the document supply service said that there was a marked improvement in communication following the appointment of specific customer accounts managers for their sectors in 2002. This was accompanied by greater personal contact through customer visits to significant customers and, more broadly, through periodic customer clinics around the country for other users (see Figure 23 on page 30).

23 How the Library obtains information about remote users' needs and satisfaction

Feedback forms on the website	Users are able to send the Library comments about any of its services. A selection of these comments is passed to the Executive Team each month with other website statistics. These comments have helped to improve aspects of the site's layout.
Usability focus groups	The Library holds focus groups in order to improve the usability of the website. Users are asked to carry out certain tasks under observation, and give their impressions about the design, layout, feel and content of the site as they are doing this.
Website mentoring	The Library has appointed an external web expert who will provide a different perspective on the site. The expert will also enable the Library to develop a longer-term strategy so that its web services continue to be user-focused.
Statistics on web usage	The Library gathers and disseminates internally statistics on usage of the major parts of the site. These statistics provide hard evidence of users' needs and interests, and have influenced decisions about the nature of services provided on the website.
Customer help desks	A team of 20 at Boston Spa, Yorkshire, handles general and accounts enquiries. During busy periods, the help desk handles up to 100 calls per person per day. These mainly relate to document supply. It also has dedicated help desks for enquiries about ordering documents electronically, the Urgent Action and Bibliographic Services, and the Copyright Office and Translation Section.
Customer visits	Between July 2002 and September 2003, representatives of the sales and customer services teams visited some 50 UK higher education establishments. Visits were also undertaken by the sales team to agents and clients overseas, as well as to significant UK users of document supply in industry and commerce.
Customer clinics	In autumn 2002, customer services introduced a programme of 12 clinics around the country for Document Supply Centre customers. These were attended by nearly 600 users. A further programme of seven clinics was held in autumn 2003, with over 500 customers in total attending to discuss a range of issues about document supply.
Regular questionnaires	A survey of users of the Document Supply Centre is conducted monthly to gather data on the importance of certain remote services and customer satisfaction with their quality (such as quality of photocopies, speed of supply). Such data feed into the Library's Key Performance Indicators and provides information about trends and how customers are responding to changes in services.[1]
Internal meetings and staff project groups	Customer services holds fortnightly team meetings and has regular liaison with staff in operations and in sales on key issues arising with customers (for example, problems over document supply or complaints about price increases). Middle managers also participate in working groups on new developments and service monitoring, such as the Automated Request Processing Service Management, Marketing Communications and Web Services Groups.

NOTE

1 One hundred customers of the document supply service are surveyed each month, with about two-thirds of the questionnaires going to a sample of larger users and the rest to smaller users. The Library is proposing to undertake a full review of the survey to ensure that the sampling methodology is dependable and that the information collected continues to meet its continuing needs in a changing market-place. A new system was due to be designed and implemented later in 2003, but this is now due to take place in 2004 (see recommendation 7).

Source: National Audit Office

4.8 We noted that the personal relationships established by the customer account manager enabled the Library to be more informed about the requirements of a particular customer and sector. This means, in turn, that the Library is able to tailor presentations and information to a customer's specific needs. This is beneficial to both the client and the Library because, in some cases, the customer does not necessarily lack awareness of the product or service available from the Library, but often requires a more detailed explanation about what this actually could do for them in particular and why they should use it.

4.9 This personal approach does not, however, extend to public libraries or other libraries in the public sector, or to other professional libraries (such as learned societies and the many others that exist in the not-for-profit sector). While it would not be cost-effective for the Library to adopt such a face-to-face approach with every customer it could usefully look at how aspects of the approach could be replicated (see recommendation 8). A few higher education librarians also remain concerned about a lack of contact with senior staff at the Library, given the amounts they spend (which can be over £100,000 a year).

4.10 Some users noted that while the Document Supply Centre is now more "business-like", it is also important that it remains approachable. A number of librarians commented on the popularity and value obtained from visiting the Library's Document Supply Centre at Boston Spa. These visits were helpful in providing an insight on how the Library operated. They also provide the Library with an audience with whom they could discuss in detail developments in service provision. Users were disappointed by the Library's decision in 2001 to stop running these visit programmes on a regular basis, although the Library does facilitate visits to the Document Supply Centre by request and its programme of customer clinics (see Figure 23) enables users to meet Library staff in person from time to time.

4.11 Some of the customers of the Document Supply Centre also noted that the Library could do more to find out how they and their organisations worked, what their requirements actually were and what they would like to see from new products. In our focus groups, some users said that they would like to be consulted on strategic issues and would appreciate more involvement in developing and trialling new ideas and in improving existing services.

Apart from the increase in 2002, the British Library has generally communicated price changes well

4.12 The price changes introduced in April and October 2000 were accompanied by a letter in the February of that year to each customer (tailored to the sector in which the customer was based - for example, higher education) to explain in detail the changes being made, the reasons why, and, where appropriate, an illustrative example of what this might mean for a typical customer in that sector.

4.13 The price changes introduced in August 2002 were accompanied by a letter in July of that year, containing little background information or reasoning. The Library subsequently had to spend time explaining the reasons for the significant changes in detail to customers who wrote in, or telephoned, to complain or to ask for more information. This was inefficient for both the Library and their customers and generated much ill-feeling. The negative impact of the 2002 price rise (see Figure 18 on page 25 and paragraphs 3.21 to 3.22 on page 26) was aggravated by the fact that users were given just over one month's notice of the impending changes. The Library has since introduced a policy of giving a minimum 90 days' notice of its proposed price changes.

4.14 The price changes announced for 2003 were, however, accompanied by a suitable letter explaining that prices were (generally) being amended in line with inflation and outlining other issues affecting the customer (for example, exchange rate modifications).

Promotional information is not always sufficiently targeted and specific

4.15 More information is now being channelled to customers electronically. In August 2003, the British Library introduced an electronic *Research and Innovation Newsletter* for document supply customers, replacing its printed quarterly *Document Supply News* and *Customer Update*. The ability to use a hyperlink[31] from the newsletter to the Library's website should provide added value to the user and help promote the Library's services. However, our research suggests that users still need to be informed of the newsletter's new format, how frequently it is published and how they can subscribe (or unsubscribe) to it.

4.16 As part of this new approach, the Library's users would welcome a free subscriber-based alerting service about new developments. They emphasised that this would need to be targeted, specific and relevant to the recipient. Information also needs to be well indexed, timely and clear about when a service will comes into effect, its cost and benefits, and which users should receive it. This media could be especially useful for advising of changes relevant to specific groups of users in between the circulation of the quarterly e-newsletter. It should be for recipients (not the Library) to say, through their subscription completion, what they wish to receive.

There is limited awareness of the Library's services among some user groups

4.17 The general public has generally had a low level of awareness of the Library. A national survey of 1,000 adult learners commissioned by the Library in 2002 found that 44 per cent were generally unaware of the Library and only seven per cent were aware of the Library's web site. These figures provide a benchmark against which progress can be measured, and the Library expects to undertake research later in 2004 to update these figures.

31 *These enable Library users to access relevant parts of the website by following electronic links in the text of the newsletter.*

4.18 Even among regular users of the Library there is a limited awareness of the full range of the Library's relevant services. There is also some confusion about the terminology used for the Library's products (for example, *Inside*/**zetoc**™ - see the Glossary) and in knowing exactly what each did and the differences between them (see recommendation 9). They were also unfamiliar with or did not use the majority of the Library's website, with the exception of those pages and services that they accessed frequently (such as the British Library Public Catalogue, document supply or *Inside*/**zetoc**™).

4.19 This is supported by an independent survey in August 2002 amongst public library staff that found that only 38 per cent had looked at the Library's website and just over 15 per cent could recall the web address from memory. To help address this problem, the Library is collaborating with public libraries to create an interactive learning package for public library staff to help improve awareness of the services the Library has to offer.

4.20 Even where services are used there is often a lack of awareness of all that the Library can provide. While most users will not necessarily need to access all the particular functions available, it is equally important that the Library ensures that its customers get the most from the services available to them, through promoting greater awareness about what they can provide, by encouraging users to try new ways of working and by ensuring that services are effectively designed and not overly complex to operate. With increasing prices, users may question the value for money of a particular service and stop using it altogether if they are not aware of the full opportunities that exist or find it difficult to use (see recommendation 10).

4.21 Library and information conferences provide good opportunities to promote awareness about the Library's website and its services. To this end, the British Library had stands at the Special Libraries Association Conference, New York (June 2003) and at Online Information, 2003 in London (December 2003). Such opportunities could usefully be developed further, both in the UK and overseas (see recommendation 10).

Appendix

Methodology

The scope of our study was the British Library's remote services, which are provided without the user having to visit the Library in person. There is a wide range of remote services, and for the purposes of our fieldwork we divided our study into three separate strands:

- the effectiveness of the website in facilitating remote use;
- the effectiveness of digitisation projects; and
- the effectiveness with which the Document Supply Centre meets the needs of users.

We also carried out background research on the library and information sector in order to gain a greater understanding of the strategic challenges that it faces in the electronic age.

The main elements of our methodology are set out below.

Focus Groups

We commissioned MORI to run two focus groups, each bringing together professionals from the library and information sector. Each group was moderated by an experienced facilitator, based on a topic guide prepared in advance. The issues discussed were as follows:

- awareness and usage of remote services;
- perceptions of and satisfaction with such services;
- barriers to usage; and
- the needs and expectations of users and potential users and the extent to which the British Library is meeting or failing to meet them.

The first group met in London on 30 September 2003 and the second in Birmingham on 2 October 2003. Each group consisted of a mix of eight representatives from the following types of libraries:

- libraries in higher and further education;
- public libraries;
- health sector libraries;
- government libraries;
- special libraries (for example, membership or organisation-based libraries).

Review of comparator organisations

In order to set the British Library's remote services in context, we conducted desk research on a number of prominent libraries and cultural organisations both in the United Kingdom and abroad. The focus of the review was the range of services supplied and audiences served by each institution.

- Biblioteque Nationale de France
- British Museum
- Library of Congress
- National Archives
- National Library of Australia
- National Library of Canada
- National Library of Scotland
- National Library of Wales
- New York Public Library
- The Royal Library, Denmark
- Victoria and Albert Museum

We followed this up with visits to, and discussion with, the Library of Congress, the National Library of Wales and the National Library of Scotland. We also reviewed information on the prices set by the Document Supply Centre's competitors. Where appropriate, as part of our stakeholder interviews (see page 34), we also explored the different types of services being provided by the library and information professionals in university libraries and company information centres to their own constituent organisations.

Interviews

We interviewed the following people, who were either professionals from the library and information sector, representatives of publisher groups or other organisations or were themselves users of the Library's services and were therefore in a good position to discuss the quality and awareness of the Library's services and wider strategic issues affecting the sector as a whole.

- Sally Morris, Chief Executive, **The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers**
- Claire Addy, Technical Information Centre, **BAE Systems**
- David Alsmeyer, Library Manager, **British Telecom**
- Barry Eaden, Head of Inter-Library Lending; Colin Clarkson, Head of Reference; Isabel Holowaty, Deputy Head of Reference; Julie Inwood, Inter-Library Lending Officer; Peter Morgan, Head of D-space Project, **Cambridge University Library**
- Bob McKee, Chief Executive, and Sue Murcott, **Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals**
- Clare Jenkins, Chair, **Consortium of University Research Libraries** (and Director of Library Services, Imperial College London)
- Professor Tony Hey, Director, **e-Science Core Programme**
- Sheila Meredith, Chief Librarian, and Wendy Cawthorne, Assistant Librarian, **Geological Society**
- Roger Brown, Head of Global Licensing, **GlaxoSmithKline**
- James Murray, **Hitwise**
- Ross Shimmon, Secretary General, **International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions**
- Professor Roderick Floud, Vice Chancellor, **London Metropolitan University** (and ex. President of Universities UK)
- Professor Charles Oppenheim, Professor of Information Science, **Loughborough University**
- Julia Chruszcz and Ross MacIntyre, **Manchester Information and Associated Services (MIMAS)** (National Data Services, Manchester Computing)
- Tony Singleton, Assistant Director, e-Government policy and strategy, **Office of the e-Envoy**
- Professor Sir David King, Chief Scientific Adviser, and Dr Andrew Kruszewski, Science Review Secretariat, **Office of Science and Technology**
- Colin Raistrick, Group Librarian, **Proctor & Gamble**
- Kenneth Dick, Chair, **Research Council Libraries and Information Consortium** (and Librarian, John Innes Centre, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council)
- Nigel Lees, Library and Archival Services Manager, and Nicola Best, Senior Library Assistant, **Royal Society of Chemistry**
- Kathy Lemaire, Chief Executive, **School Libraries Association**
- Toby Bainton, Secretary, **Society of College, National and University Libraries**
- Professor Helen Margetts and Dr Simon Bastow, **University College, London**
- Dr Tom Graham, Librarian, **University of Newcastle**
- Anne Bell, Librarian, **University of Warwick**

Website links and other discussion groups

We sought and received views from the library and information profession, and more general users of the British Library, through information circulated to subscribers of the discussion list for the People's Network Project (maintained and updated through the Joint Information Systems Committee *JISCmail* website); through the British Library and National Audit Office websites; and through contact with the library and information trade journals.

Expert Panel

We made use of a panel of experts at key stages of our study. These experts were invited to comment on the scope, methodology, and outline of our report and reviewed our emerging findings. The members of the panel were:

- **Dr Alicia Wise**, Head of Development, Joint Information Systems Committee (now, Chief Executive, Publishers Licensing Society)
- **Professor Bob Usherwood**, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield
- **Catherine Blanshard**, Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer, Leeds City Council and Honorary Secretary of the Society of Chief Librarians
- **Chris Batt OBE**, Chief Executive, Resource (now the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council)
- **Professor Dominic Shellard,** Department of English Literature, University of Sheffield
- **Mick Archer**, Virtual Library Portfolio Manager, Global IS&L, AstraZeneca

Review of management capacity

In order to assess the Library's ability to manage a significant change programme and to respond to the challenges of the electronic age, we conducted a review of its management capacity. Throughout our fieldwork, we observed the British Library's working practices and interviewed several staff. We referenced our observations against the EFQM Excellence Model, an overarching model of organisational excellence, to ensure that our findings were rigorous and had wider applicability.

The EFQM Excellence Model is a diagnostic self-assessment tool used by organisations in both the public and private sectors worldwide. It is an holistic model of organisational excellence which defines outstanding practice in managing an organisation and achieving results, based upon a set of fundamental concepts.

These fundamental concepts are:

- results orientation;
- customer focus;
- partnership development;
- leadership and constancy of purpose;
- people development and involvement;
- management by processes and facts;
- continuous learning, innovation and improvement; and
- public responsibility.

Of these nine fundamental concepts, we identified three as particularly relevant to management capacity - *leadership and constancy of purpose, people development and involvement* and *continuous learning, innovation and improvement*. We used these concepts to identify where the Library's strengths lay in terms of its ability to manage internal change and increase organisational responsiveness to users' demands. Our conclusion, that the Library is strong in terms of management capacity, is thus grounded in a rigorous theoretical framework.

Review of documents

At all stages of our fieldwork, we reviewed the Library's key documentation, including:

- strategic documents;
- customer information packs, updates and newsletters;
- customer satisfaction survey results and survey validation review;
- key management and performance information;
- sectoral data;
- Document Supply Centre pricing models and internal audit report on costing and charging;
- internal communication on key developments within the Library and in the wider library and information environment;
- details of digitisation projects;
- website usability focus group transcripts;
- reports on website accessibility audits; and
- documents related to market research.

This was backed up by regular meetings with, and advice from, senior and middle managers at the Library and a selection of customer-facing staff based at the Document Supply Centre at Boston Spa, Yorkshire.

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Accessibility	This refers to the ability of the user to access all parts of a website (and the services provided through it) regardless of physical disability.
Bespoke research services	The Library runs an information service which provides tailored reports. Its research experts are able to source information which cannot be found through web search engines. Areas covered include: patents, trademarks and designs; biology and medicine; chemistry; engineering and technology; companies and markets; and official publications.
Bibliographic services	These services form part of the National Bibliographic Service and include recording the national published output, contributing to the development of national and international bibliographic standards, and selling or licensing other products and services.
Bookshop	The Library publishes titles under its own imprint and in association with other publishers. These are available for purchase either online or in person at the Library's bookshop in St. Pancras, London.
Bookmarks	A function on the web browser to help users keep track of important web pages so that they do not have to remember individual addresses.
British Library Co-operation Partnership Programme	The Library works in partnership with the UK library and information network and other key stakeholders in a number of collaborative projects which help the Library to meet the information needs of the citizen, improve cataloguing and reach the regions.
British Library Public Catalogue	This provides access to the main Library catalogues, describing over ten million items available either in the Reading Rooms or through the Document Supply Centre. The catalogue can be accessed in several ways, including via the Library's website.
British Thesis Service	Copies of 170,000 UK doctoral theses/dissertations can be supplied by the Library on microfilm or as bound paper copies. Registered customers can borrow these on microfilm.
Commercial customers	Private sector users of the Library's services.
Copying service	The Library will provide a copy of an extract from its collection of 260,000 journal titles, 400,000 conference proceedings or its extensive collection of official publications, reports, books, theses and music.
Copyright fees	These are levied by the Library on behalf of publishers on copies ordered through the Document Supply Centre which are for any kind of commercial use. They vary by publication and are set by the publishers or their agents. Copyright fees do not apply to loans or documents supplied under Library Privilege.
Customer Updates	Information issued, usually quarterly, to registered users of the document supply service. This provides advice about prices, procedures, systems and services. The Updates are also available direct from the Library's website and via a link in the Research and Innovation newsletter.

DCMS Public Service Agreement	Each Government Department such as Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has a Public Service Agreement (PSA) which sets out its aim, objectives and key outcome-based targets. PSAs form an important part of the Government's Spending Review process and require each Department to report periodically on the progress it has made against its targets.
Digitisation	The process by which analogue (non-digital) material is copied and converted into digital formats. Most analogue materials can be digitised, including manuscripts (see Treasures below), books, journals, newspapers and sound recordings.
Document Supply Centre	One of the world's largest and broadest collections devoted to the supply of documents (as either loans or reproductions) to remote users. The Document Supply Centre is based in Boston Spa, Yorkshire.
Education services	A range of education services are provided. For example, the Library offers curriculum resources for use in the classroom, such as the 21st Century Citizen online resource for 11-16 year olds. It is currently developing resources that will enable young adults and lifelong learners develop research skills.
Electronic journals	Electronic versions of journals. These can be accessed remotely over the web. Generally, publishers sell licences of electronic journals in "bundles", enabling host libraries to gain access to a range of publications.
ESTAR	British Library's electronic storage and retrieval system for its collection of electronic journals held under licence agreement with various publishers. Access is provided to users of the Library's Reading Rooms and by secure electronic delivery for document supply and inside customers.
Executive Team	The main executive committee of the Library, consisting of the Chief Executive and the six Directors who head the separate directorates of the Library (Scholarships and Collections, Operations and Services, Strategic Marketing and Communications, Finance and Corporate Resources, Human Resources, e-Strategy and Information Systems).
Fair dealing	The rights granted to users by copyright laws to reproduce portions of copyrighted works without infringing the legitimate interest of the authors or copyright owners.
Funding Agreement	The principal agreement between DCMS and British Library which sets out for the period April 2003 to March 2006, the Government's core strategic objectives, which shows how the Library's own objectives will contribute to their achievement, and which lays out the targets against which this is to be measured.
Images Online	Thousands of high resolution images from the Library's collections available for delivery direct to the desktop or by CD-ROM or transparency.
***Inside* service**	A licence fee service for organisations, based on single or multiple users. Gives access via the web to details of some 20 million journal articles and conference proceedings contained in the British Library Electronic Table of Contents database. Incorporates e-mail alerting, flexible searching, and document ordering.

Integrated Library System (ILS)	The ILS is a new data processing system which will be operational from mid 2004; it will provide better co-ordination and more efficient processing of the Library's acquisitions, enhanced cataloguing and catalogue access, and will provide links to external systems for the exchange of bibliographic data with other organisations.
Integrated Request Management Document Delivery System	A two phase project to modernise the Library's document delivery and ordering systems through the introduction of high speed digital scanners and digital volume printers as well as secure electronic delivery. Phase two will replace the present user request processing system.
Key Performance Indicators	The Library's key performance measures that are either part of the targets agreed with the DCMS for the Library's Funding Agreement (see above), or are part of the Library's own Business Plan management information.
Landing pages	A mechanism to channel users to relevant website material based on their audience type. These are situated beneath the main home page on the Library's website, and each user group has its own dedicated landing page (for example, services for researchers) which provides links to useful resources.
Legal deposit library	Under copyright legislation, certain libraries are entitled to receive or claim a copy of every published material within the territory over which the legislation is enforced. These libraries have the function of preserving the published output of those territories.
Library catalogue	A catalogue is a bibliographic record of the materials held by a library. The record typically contains the following information: authorship, publication details, description and shelfmark. The British Library's main catalogue is the British Library Public Catalogue.
Library privilege	Where a copyright fee does not need to be paid on the copy of a document (for example, where use of the copy is for a non commercial purpose).
Loan services	Organisations may borrow original items from the Library's collection instead of obtaining copies. The Library does not lend to individuals. It also offers an automated loan renewal service.
Location search	The Library will undertake an extended search (UK and/or Worldwide) where a document is not available from the Document Supply collection.
Open Access	Open access journals can be accessed by readers or their institutions without charge.
Open Archives	The Open Archives Initiative supplies a common framework to web communities that allows them to gain access to web content in a standard manner.
Overseas services	Different prices and terms apply to international customers of the Library's services. Customers in the Irish Republic are treated the same as those in the UK.
Patent services	The Library's document supply service holds an extensive collection of patent series from all over the world. Most are available in CD-ROM.
Public good customers	The public good sector consists of users of the Library in higher education, government, health and public libraries.
Reading Rooms	These provide physical access to the Library's collections held at St. Pancras and Colindale, London and Boston Spa, Yorkshire. The main reading rooms are located in St. Pancras and provide around 1,200 spaces for readers. Access to the reading rooms is limited to those who can demonstrate a legitimate need to use the items in the collection.
Registered users	The Library recommends that its customers register to make the most effective use and benefit from its services. Registration is free.