



| **The Higher Education** |
Consultancy Group

A Report to the JISC and the RSLP

**Resolving the Human Issues in LIS
Projects**

Final Report: July 2002

Contents

	Executive Summary	3
1	Introduction	8
	The need for the study	8
	Aims and purpose of the study	10
	The study team	10
	Study methodology	10
	The projects under review	11
	The structure of the report	12
2	The Context for the Study	13
	Studies of academic contract staff	13
	Studies relating to non-academic staff	15
	Legislative changes	17
	Other relevant system-wide factors	18
3	Project Staff and Project Directors - a Summary of Research Findings	20
	Introduction	20
	Project staff	20
	Recruitment	21
	Job security and reward	23
	Development, training and support	25
	Project directors – management of staff	26
	Project directors – support for career development and at exit	29
	Project directors – bidding and planning	29
	Project directors - institutional support	30
4	Institutional HR Policies and Practice	31
	Introduction	31
	The use of fixed term contracts	32
	Recruitment and retention	34
	Waiver clauses	35
	Bridging funds	36
	Staff training and development	36
	Performance review	37
	Career planning and guidance at contract end	38
	Conclusions	38

5	The Funding Bodies	40
	Issues of concern	40
	Conclusions	43
6	Analysis and Recommendations	44
	Recommendations for institutions	45
	Recommendations for LIS managers and project managers	46
	Recommendations for the funding bodies	48
	Appendices:	
I	Responses to Questionnaire for project directors	51
II	Responses to Questionnaire for project staff	56
III	Bibliography	63
IV	Explanation of the Acronyms	66

Executive Summary

- 1 This study was commissioned by the JISC and RSLP in October 2001 and the work was undertaken between then and June 2002 by a team from CHEMS Consulting and the Higher Education Consultancy Group.
- 2 The aim of the study is to “learn about the issues surrounding the recruitment, development and retention of project staff in UK HE libraries and archives, with special reference to RSLP and JISC projects”.
- 3 Since the Follett Report in 1993 there have been over 500 funded projects in the library and information services and these have involved at least 1,000 staff who have worked on fixed term contracts. Most of them have had no job security beyond the project’s life. The study focuses on the human resource issues concerning these people, as there is a strong case for trying to retain their skills within the sector in order to enhance future Library and Information Service (LIS) provision.
- 4 The topic of fixed term contracts has been heavily explored recently in the context of academic researchers. The Concordat of 1996 which was supported by a consortium of research councils, academic societies and the CVCP highlighted the concerns of over 30,000 academic researchers. This was followed by a Research Contract Initiative (RCI) led by Universities UK and the Office of Science and Technology which seeks to persuade institutions to implement the principles of the Concordat. The RCI is still continuing its work of producing guidance on good practice and reports from institutions. The issues involving the growth in use of fixed term contracts are major concerns to the relevant trade unions.
- 5 Similar work has been underway in Scotland since 1995 and in two tranches of funding the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council has supported a substantial staff development for project managers and contract research staff. In addition a major tracking study was undertaken of all the 3,300 contract academic researchers in Scotland in 1998. The report from that study published in December 2001 reaches very similar conclusions to those in this report.
- 6 Data collection for the study included two web based surveys: one to staff on the 457 projects stretching back to 1994, and the other to the project directors and managers. The former group were located by finding project directors and asking them to provide the names and whereabouts of project staff, and secondly, contacting all those staff identified and asking them to complete the web-based survey. The Data Protection Act proved to be an obstacle as many project directors felt that its provisions prevented them from passing on the names of project staff. This was overcome by asking them to forward letters about the survey. As a result, over 500 project staff were identified, and in all, 65 project directors and 138 project staff completed the survey; a response rate of 43% from those 474 email addresses that were subsequently found to be valid. The results of these two surveys are shown in Appendices I and II and are referred to extensively in the report. This response rate compares favourably with other attempts to track contract research workers.

- 7 In addition, the team visited nine institutions to interview project directors, their staff and institutional representatives such as the head of LIS and staff from the human resource function. Two focus groups were held in Glasgow and Leeds to test some of our emerging findings and interviews were held with representatives of funders.

Main findings

- 8 The findings from all data sources are consistent with those issues identified by the RCI/Concordat and by the SHEFC study. We summarise them under six main headings:
- 9 **Recruitment of staff:** The evidence shows that generalisations on recruitment are not possible owing to the many specialisms being sought, the influence of location and the timing of projects requiring similar skills. In general project work is an attractive and sought after option for LIS staff, so that in many cases there are plenty of applicants for posts. However, there have been occasions when recruitment has proved very difficult (particularly for archivists, specialist cataloguers and linguists) causing projects to be delayed. 42% of project directors consider that it is becoming harder to obtain good staff, although 43% think there has been no change.
- 10 **Reward:** Although most project staff consider themselves poorly paid, (56% of those surveyed earn under £20,000) this factor does not rank as highly as the lack of job security in their concerns. Many are however distressed at the lack of any career structure allowing them salary progression, and some staff with many years project experience had not seen their pay increase. Competitive bidding for projects is seen as one of the main drivers keeping salaries low. More general concerns were voiced over conditions of service and there is a feeling among some LIS contract staff that they were not treated the same as permanent LIS staff.
- 11 **Job security.** The lack of job security is the major concern of fixed term contract staff and there is strong evidence that it causes uncertainty, personal distress and leads to avoidable mobility of staff towards the end of fixed term contracts. 65% of project directors reported that staff had left early during their project. When this happens, directors suffer because of the disruption caused to the project's final months and the aggravation caused by having to find very short term replacements. The report identifies the uncertain contractual position of anyone who wishes to make a career of LIS project work, but finds that many staff consider this as an inevitable fact of academic life, about which nothing can be done. Many project directors surprisingly shared this view.
- 12 **Retention:** Retention of project staff in the sector is good, since in the last resort, although they claim to look outside higher education for work, staff tend to opt for further contracts in the sector. It is seen as offering many advantages, such as fulfilling and challenging work, although only 50% stated that staying in higher education was their career plan.
- 13 **Staff development and support:** The evidence shows that although induction and technical training is widespread, other forms of staff development are not widely

taken up by contract staff. Some think they are second class citizens in terms of the benefits and support they receive from the institution. However, there is a striking ignorance about the human resource services that are available to them and only 35% of staff have been given annual appraisals or performance reviews.

- 14 **Funding methodologies** Project directors believe that funders could help overcome some of the staffing issues noted above by amending aspects of the funding methodology and bidding process. Most also feel that project budgets should expect to meet all the direct staffing costs that had been incurred (eg. staff development, interview travel costs), with a more generous interpretation of the relevant 'on-costs', such as rented space or management time.
- 15 The consistent message that emerges from the qualitative survey comments and interviews with staff is that, despite all the disadvantages of project life, it remains - for most - satisfying and challenging. However, for some the frustrations and hardships have become too much and they look for work elsewhere. Many are resigned to the situation not changing. There is a tacit acceptance that many of the difficulties are system-wide and associated with modern academic life rather than peculiar to the project, the funding body or the host institution. However, some difficulties are institutional, although, perhaps because of a lack of experience, respondents are not always able to identify what might be done to tackle problems.
- 16 In such circumstances, the key question to ask is: does a major problem exist in the staffing of LIS projects? To some extent the answer depends on whose views are sought. From the perspective of the staff concerned the answers are relatively predictable: the large majority all want greater job security; a reduction in the frustrations of project life; and greater integration within mainstream LIS services. These aspirations would generally be supported by relevant trade unions, critical of the consequences of casualisation. Project managers would generally agree, and many have suffered from the endemic problems of project work resulting from the early departure of key staff on fixed term contracts before projects end.
- 17 However, from an institutional and system-wide perspective the answer is much less clear: most projects are completed with staff costs kept relatively low; there are no obvious indicators of institutional concern about shortages of LIS staff; indeed many think the issue not significant enough to identify in their HR strategy. In such cases it is tempting to conclude that the staffing problems are typical of project funding, and, although difficult for the staff concerned, just a fact of modern employment. However, this is not to say that some action should not be taken by institutions and funding bodies.
- 18 Institutional practice in support of LIS project staff varies considerably, and visits to nine HEIs showed a wide the range of practice in the implementation of effective human resource policies. Some are excellent practitioners and examples of good practice from case study institutions are presented in the report, but a few are poor. Areas where practice differed were:
- The existence of clear policies on the use of fixed term contracts.

- The dissemination of information to contract staff about their employment rights under legislation.
 - Flexibility in adapting institutional recruitment and employment processes to the funders' timetable.
 - The use of a redundancy waiver clause in fixed term contracts.
 - Open notification to fixed term contract staff of their legal employment rights.
 - The creation of bridging funds at any level to plug salary gaps between contracts and so retain key staff.
 - The application of policies on staff development, appraisal and performance review to all contract staff in exactly the same way as permanent staff.
 - The provision of career planning advice and support for staff nearing the end of their contract.
- 19 The conclusion from the review of institutional practices is that ways should be found of bringing the 'worst' practitioners up to the standards of the 'best'. It was also found that no institutions automatically included LIS project staff within the good practice suggestions of the RCI/Concordat.
- 20 Some issues relating to the funding bodies have an impact on project staff. The first concerns funding body policies on meeting all staff-related costs within project budgets. There is some uncertainty as to just what is, and is not, included. In particular, institutions are uncertain as to whether they can claim for all staff development costs for project staff. Soon a large number of redundancy payments will figure among claims to funders and whether or not these can be recovered needs to be confirmed.
- 21 A second issue for funders is the perennial one of paying for central overhead costs and, although this is an historic regulation, the exact definition of what is an overhead needs clarification. It is noted that a growing number of institutions are not bidding for projects where they are unable to recover any overhead expenses.
- 22 Third, the bunching of the launch of projects requiring specialist skills can lead to delays and problems due to the inability to recruit staff. Some phasing of project start dates might provide some respite.
- 23 One debatable point is whether those bodies funding LIS projects have any obligation to help to develop the relevant skills in project staff. Although it might be argued that there is an analogy with the research councils who see the development and training of research staff as a key outcome from their funding, we do not believe the comparison is apt, as the work of LIS project staff is developmental and not research and has a shorter horizon. Thus the prime responsibility for ensuring that the LIS profession contains the right skills sets is with the LIS managers and their advisers in the profession. Despite this, the funders have an interest in seeing that staff working on their projects are treated well in accordance with the best human resource practice. They must also make sure that nothing they do makes the situation of project staff any worse.
- 24 A number of recommendations are made for various audiences; these principally relate to improving human resource practices. These include:

Institutions

- All should apply the principles of the RCI Concordat to LIS project staff.
- Fixed term contract staff must be treated in the same way as permanent staff.
- All institutions should have a specialist on career research staff issues in the central HR function and this person should also look after LIS project staff.
- All institutions must be encouraged to follow good practice as regards career research staff and LIS project staff.
- Institutions should seek to recover all the costs related to staff from funders and must not bid at unrealistically low salary levels.

LIS Heads and project directors

- Fixed term contracts should be issued for as long as possible within the terms of the project.
- LIS heads should ensure that their project staff are treated as well as CRS by the HR function.
- LIS heads should liaise with the institutional head of HR to ensure that the institution matches the good practice described in this report.
- LIS managers have to recognise that there are special skills requirements for staff asked to become project managers and should develop a cadre of such people with appropriate staff development.
- LIS heads should aim to create reserve funds to act as a bridging fund for meeting the costs of key fixed term contract staff.
- Project directors will need to work closely with project staff to understand their career plans and suggest appropriate support services.

Funders and other bodies

- CILIP, UCISA and SCONUL should agree on good practice as regards LIS project staff and then seek to encourage its adoption by HR managers in institutions and LIS project directors.
- Funding bodies should state their commitment to good human resource practice in the LIS projects they fund.
- They should clarify what staff related costs they will meet from project budgets in their documentation and specifically emphasise that projects can claim the costs of staff development.
- Career information on similar job opportunities should be available to LIS project staff as they near the end of their project and CILIP, UCISA and SCONUL should explore the various mechanisms for achieving this.

25. Since several of these recommendations require co-ordinated action between bodies such as CILIP, UCISA and SCONUL, we support the notion of a conference in the autumn/winter of 2002 to disseminate the findings of this study and to work on an action plan for helping the heads of LIS to achieve implementation within their own institutions.

1 Introduction

The need for the study

- 1.1 Since the Follett Report in 1993 the library and information service (LIS) community has hosted a significant number of projects funded by organisations such as JISC, the British Library, and the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP). Such projects have covered a wide range of activities within LIS including the development of the electronic library, the cataloguing and archiving of research materials and the digitisation of content for the Distributed National Electronic Resource (DNER). This study focuses on those who have worked on projects financed by the RSLP and JISC, although there have been – and continue to be - several other funding agencies supporting LIS staff with short term project finance.
- 1.2 The bulk of the staff working on these projects have been employed on short term contracts with no job security beyond the project's life. Yet, the skills they have acquired in undertaking the project are frequently in high demand due to the growing need for specialist staff in the 'hybrid libraries' that are now emerging. LIS staff have very different roles from those they had at the time of the Follett Report, and project staff are often among those most qualified to fill these roles. Their retention within the LIS community and the higher education sector more generally is therefore very important.
- 1.3 In parallel with the growth of contract project staff in the LIS functions, contract staff elsewhere in higher education have been under the spotlight. In particular, academic contract research staff (CRS) have been the focus of several initiatives throughout the UK, and human resource (HR) strategies as a whole have been promoted throughout the sector. However, none of these initiatives relate to short term project staff in library and information services, and one of the important questions considered in this report is the extent to which proposed actions to address the employment circumstances of research contract staff are also relevant to those in the LIS function. One institution has found that academic researchers represent only 50% of its fixed term contract staff, so that the LIS project staff are not the only group outside the initiatives affecting CRS.
- 1.4 There are two key differences between the two sets of staff; first, most of those in LIS services are not going to pursue a career in research as such, indeed our survey data shows that most of them are seeking careers in library services and management. This has a number of implications for how institutions perceive the needs of such staff, for example our data suggests that training is mainly provided to support the technical development of projects, rather than the long term personal development of the individual. Second, project staff in the LIS function are rarely undertaking 'research' in the RAE sense, but are more often working at the development end of R&D, and they are rarely registered for research degrees. Thus, as we shall see, they are not usually considered by institutional managers to be covered by the provisions of the Research Careers Concordat¹.

¹ CVCP (1998) Employing contract researchers: a guide to best practice. To be found among all the Concordat publications at www.universitiesUK.ac.uk/activities/rci.asp.

- 1.5 Because of the previous lack of attention to LIS project staff there is a need to examine any special staffing factors influencing the effectiveness of LIS projects. This has been confirmed by several evaluation reports. The Tavistock Institute's final summative report on the JISC's NFF Initiative stated that "staff recruitment and turnover proved a major headache over the lifetime of the programme" and in commenting on the impact of the programme they suggested that "the large majority of staff were on short term contracts and their newly acquired skills, knowledge and competence were commonly lost to the institution (but not necessarily the sector)"².
- 1.6 Similarly the evaluation of the eLib programme by ESYS reported that "some projects found it difficult to recruit and keep effective project technical officers"³, and there was a general concern about the long term retention of the skills that had been acquired: "eLib had created a new cadre of 'electronically-aware' librarians with practical experience of research projects; these skills, and by implication at least some of the investment, may be lost to the sector if eLib activities were not sustained." The evaluation reported that, where no funding existed to make the eLib innovation sustainable in the host institution, the activities started by project staff often fail to be embedded and the staff themselves may well be lost to the institution and the sector. A recent study for the RSLP of all its collaborative projects was more wide ranging in its comment: "personnel issues (grading scales, grading of posts, recruitment procedures, delays) were almost universally seen as very problematic".⁴
- 1.7 These comments echo numerous similar observations in many evaluations of initiatives involving short term funding, where problems are frequently cited such as delays in the appointment of staff, problems of recruitment, and a tendency to experience difficulties in finishing projects on time because of staff moving on to new jobs. Therefore in this report we try and separate those factors which tend to be generic to project funding, and those that are specific to LIS projects.
- 1.8 In this report, we use the term "LIS project staff" to describe all those from the LIS function working on projects. Most of these are on fixed term contracts but some are permanent members of staff. However, some of the projects included staff from academic departments where the focus of the work was on academic content. We use the term "project director" to refer to the person with overall responsibility for the control of project staff and their performance appraisal and review. We appreciate that a two tier structure is common in which a project manager has day to day control over the project, while a project director has the institutional accountability for the project. It is not unusual for the project director to be a permanent staff member of the library and information service or in an academic department.

² The Tavistock Institute (2000). Non Formula Funding of Specialised Research Collections in the Humanities 1994-99: the NFF Initiative. Final report of the Summative Evaluation.

³ ESYS (2001, 2000) Summative Evaluation of Phase 3 of the eLib Initiative. Main report, p.12. Summative evaluation of Phases 1 and 2. Final report. pp 48-9.

⁴ Harris, C. (2002) Experience of running collaborative projects: report to the Research Support Libraries Programme. New Review of Academic Librarianship. Vol 7, 2001, pp 37-49

Aims and purpose of this study

- 1.9 The long term aim of this study as defined by RSLP in their invitation to tender is “to audit the [project] workforce in preparation for further change and development and to determine a strategy for the sector”. In particular, in commissioning the report the RSLP identified the need to focus on the “issues surrounding the recruitment, development and retention of project staff in UK higher education libraries and archives with special reference to RSLP and JISC projects”. This would allow a strategy to be determined for the future, based on tangible evidence.
- 1.10 RSLP expects the report to “make recommendations in respect of future employment and training practices within the relevant parts of UK higher education” and it hopes that the outcomes of the project will be used to inform the sector about future human resource planning and development.
- 1.11 Although the study has been carried out wholly within higher education institutions, the same concerns about fixed term contract staff will arise within the further education sector. FE colleges are now beginning to gain project funding from JISC (in the X4L programme, for example) and may therefore want to adapt the messages in this study to their own environment.

The study team

- 1.12 The study was launched in October 2001 and continued detailed work until June 2002. It was carried out by the following team:

John Fielden	Director, CHEMS Consulting. Team leader.
Allan Schofield	Head, The Higher Education Consultancy Group.
Jan Wilkinson	University Librarian, University of Leeds.
Cliff Wragg	Independent consultant in human resources.
Svava Bjarnason	Head, Policy and Research Unit, Association of Commonwealth Universities.
Derek Murphy	Researcher, Association of Commonwealth Universities.

Study methodology

- 1.13 The methodology of the study had six elements:
- An initial review of literature and concurrent projects.
 - Tracking staff who had worked on previous projects and their project directors.
 - Requesting members of both groups to complete a web based survey.
 - Visiting a selection of case study institutions.
 - Holding two national focus group meetings to test emerging findings.
 - Producing the final report.
- 1.14 The literature review was a continuing activity, as new reports continued to emerge during the six months of the study. The issue of the employment of academic contract research staff has become an important one due to the emphasis that government is

placing on the development of the UK science base. In Chapter 2 we summarise the relevant findings from the research and policy studies underway in this area.

- 1.15 The availability of evidence for the study depended to a large extent on tracking project staff who had worked on the projects being considered. The task was complicated by the fact that the 457 projects included in the brief stretched back to 1994 so that many staff had moved from their original institution. Mobility between institutions is common for project staff and former project directors had not always kept in touch. After consulting the Steering Group, it was decided to survey 100% of those that could be identified. This task had two stages: first, finding project directors and asking them to provide the names and whereabouts of project staff; secondly, contacting all those staff identified and asking them to complete the web-based survey. The Data Protection Act proved to be an obstacle as many project directors felt that its provisions prevented them from passing on the names of project staff. This was overcome by asking them to forward letters about the survey.
- 1.16 As a result of an extensive amount of research work over 500 project staff were identified and emails were sent to them asking them to complete two web-based surveys; one for project directors and one for project staff. In all, 65 project directors and 138 project staff completed the survey; a response rate of 43% from those 474 email addresses that were subsequently found to be valid. The results of these two surveys are shown in Appendices I and II and are referred to extensively in the report. This response rate compares favourably with other attempts to track contract research workers.
- 1.17 The survey design presented problems owing to the elapsed time since some respondents had worked on projects. It was decided not to develop further separate questionnaires, but to use the two existing ones and to ask respondents to complete it in respect of their project whenever it was. Another complication arose from some staff having worked on more than one project. In these cases we asked the staff to answer in respect of their most recent project, so that the information was as up to date as possible. However, those staff who only worked on one project some years ago may have given a historic bias to their answers.
- 1.18 In order to publicise the survey and improve the chances of tracking project staff an advertisement was placed in the LA Record, and an article written for its Advertising Supplement in March 2002. A brief paper was also placed in the electronic journal Ariadne.
- 1.19 In order to meet project staff and to obtain an institutional perspective on all issues relevant to the study nine institutional visits were made. HEIs were selected in order to provide a representative sample, covering factors such as geography, size, research intensiveness etc. Emphasis was also placed on those who had hosted multiple projects and where the staffing implications might have been expected to be greater.
- 1.20 In each visit we interviewed a number of project directors and project staff, and sought to meet the heads of LIS and relevant staff in the central HR function.

- 1.21 In April and May the team held two focus group meetings using the Universities of Strathclyde and Leeds as venues. In each case there were nine participants, representing the key interest groups. These events were used to discuss the emerging findings from the study.
- 1.22 The survey approach could be criticised for its lack of rigour and scientific design which could lead some to question the validity of its findings. However, the results of the survey have been amply confirmed by the other approaches to data collection – institutional visits, interviews and focus groups. The team is happy that the triangulation which these approaches provided has produced findings that are consistent and that can justify the conclusions reached.
- 1.23 Three meetings took place with the study Steering Group and resulted in many helpful suggestions being provided. Their advice and comments were taken into account in the final report.

The projects under review

- 1.24 At the suggestion of the Steering Group the projects reviewed were those funded under the three stages of the E Lib programme, a series of JISC programmes (JCALT, DNER, NFF and JISC/NSF) and the two main strands of RSLP funding, the CCM and RCHSS programmes. The JISC funded JTAP projects were not included as they were technically focussed with very specialist staffing requirements.
- 1.25 The total number of projects where we sought to contact staff was 457, as follows:

Elib	All 3 phases	71 projects
JISC	DNER	35 projects
	NFF	262 projects
	Other	37 projects
RSLP	CCM	16 projects
	RCHSS	36 projects

They represent a particularly important specialist skill set within LIS services, as their work will be central to the development of electronic information services within the hybrid library.

The structure of the report

- 1.26 The structure of the report is relatively simple: Chapter Two sets the study in a broad context by both outlining the findings from related studies of academic contract researchers in recent years and also by briefly summarising other contextual issues. Chapter Three describes the findings that have emerged during the study as regards project staff members and project directors. Chapter Four then reviews issues and findings concerning the implementation of institutional HR policies and practice, while Chapter Five describes some of the issues arising for the funding bodies. In Chapter Six recommendations are made for each of the main groups. The Appendices contain separate summaries of the survey results for project staff and project directors, and a bibliography.

2. The Context for the Study

- 2.1 Recent years have seen a growing interest in the issues resulting from the extensive use of fixed term contracts in higher education. The growth of so-called 'casualisation' has been extensive, only partly fuelled by the contract funding nature of the research and project environment. A general description of the issues is unnecessary for this study, but despite some benefits for institutions, for over a decade there has been widespread concern both on macro issues (for example the impact on long term research capacity and trade unions' concerns for employment rights), and on micro ones (for example, specific difficulties in staff recruitment, contractual insecurity, and a host of operational issues arising from constant renewal or re-negotiation of short term contracts)⁵.
- 2.2 In this Chapter we review briefly the key studies that have a bearing on the HR concerns of LIS project staff. We begin with those relating to academic research staff, and then look at those covering a wider range of staff, including those in LIS. We also note the relevant legislative changes in the field, which are beginning to have an impact. Finally, we consider the significance of the system-wide HR environment as it is developing, including the institutional HR strategies that have been prepared as a result of the funding bodies' funding programme on rewarding and retaining staff.

Studies of academic contract research staff

- 2.3 In the UK there are around 100,000 full-time and over 14,000 part-time academic staff and around 37,000 researchers of whom 30,000 or so are on fixed term contracts. Across all disciplines contract researchers represent 28% of full time staff but in some subjects this rises to over 50%⁶. In an attempt to provide a framework to assist HEIs in dealing with some of the negative consequences of short term contracts in 1996 the Research Councils, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, the British Academy and the Royal Society agreed a 'Concordat' aimed at improving the careers of these contract research staff⁷. There were three main commitments:
- To bring their terms and conditions in line with those of established staff.
 - To provide them with specialist or general training and career guidance.
 - To achieve continuity of their funding and employment, "where the research justified it."
- 2.4 The Concordat was widely acknowledged as being sensible, but there was also considerable criticism of its caution and the fact that good practice was generally not identified. Accordingly in 1997 the signatories to the Concordat set up the Research Careers Initiative (RCI) to take forward implementation and to disseminate best practice. The RCI members included administrative and professional staff from institutions, representatives of funding bodies and the relevant trade unions. The secretariat is provided by UniversitiesUK and the Office of Science and Technology.

⁵ See for example, Realising Their Potential, Report of the Contract Research Staff Initiative 1996-97, SHEFC, www.shef.ac.uk

⁶ Roberts, G. (2002) Review of research in science and engineering. Para 5.2 and 5.6. DTI.

⁷ For a range of information concerning the Concordat see www.universitiesUK.ac.uk/activities/rci.asp.

- 2.5 The RCI has produced three progress reports since 1997, all of which have reported good progress by institutions, but have also included statements such as “the pace and scale of change need to be increased further fully to deliver the objectives of the RCI”.⁸ It is clear that barriers of culture and poor commitment remain, even though there are examples of good practice in many institutions.
- 2.6 In 1998 the RCI set up a Career Management Working Group which produced a Guide to Best Practice in employing contract researchers⁹. This clearly set out some basic principles and a large number of practical recommendations for project directors and institutions. Many of these are directly relevant to LIS project staff and are referred to later in this report.
- 2.7 The secretariat for the RCI is planning to produce a further progress report and a general updating of the position in institutions in the management of contract research staff in late 2002. At about the same time the HEFCE will also publish a set of guidelines for PhD researchers under the title “People and Research”.
- 2.8 A similar set of outputs will emerge from one of the HEFCE good management practice projects. GMP 64, based at the University of Sheffield, is developing - together with 17 partner institutions - a set of career management tools including a staff review and development scheme for contract research staff, and handbooks for them and their principal investigators on the transferability of skills and materials to help track career paths and advise on career development.¹⁰
- 2.9 The Contract Research Online Survey (CROS) project at the University of Bristol offers HEIs a free web-based survey tool for them to assess their contract research staff in connection with the main themes of the Concordat - personnel management, training and development, career development and human resource administration.¹¹ 17 institutions have carried out surveys but we understand that none of these have covered LIS project staff. In the surveys carried out in 2002 24% of CRS responded, a lower response rate than in our own survey.
- 2.10 In Scotland the funding council, SHEFC, has had a Contract Research Staff Initiative underway since 1995. As a response to the numerous problems facing such staff, in the first phase eight projects were funded to promote the development of expertise in the employment and management of contract research staff. They ranged from projects aimed at the managers of research projects to those developing the skills of researchers themselves by helping them to search for jobs and plan their careers. The results of the projects were disseminated to Scottish institutions in December 1997.

⁸ Research Careers Initiative (2001). Third Interim Report. Extract from the Preface by Professor Sir Gareth Roberts.

⁹ CVCP (1998) Employing contract researchers: a guide to best practice. To be found at www.universitiesUK.ac.uk/activities/rci.asp.

¹⁰ HEFCE (2002) HEFCE Good Management Practice Programme. Progress report on projects. Publication 02/27.

¹¹ For details of the CROS survey see www.cros.ac.uk

- 2.11 A second phase of the Scottish Initiative funded three further projects in the period 1999-2001. Two were devoted to developing the capacity of the managers of contract research staff and of the staff themselves. One based at the University of Strathclyde involved running 30 workshops on various topics all over Scotland and six similar events were later delivered more widely in England in collaboration with UCOSDA/HESDA. The second at the University of Aberdeen focussed on encouraging research staff to be more strategic in their thinking about their careers.
- 2.12 The third project, undertaken by the University of Warwick, was a major two year tracking study of the career destinations of contract research staff. It identified all 3,300 such researchers in Scotland in 1998 and surveyed them at that time and two years later in 2000. The findings from this exercise were published in December 2001¹² and are similar to many of the conclusions in this report. The study concludes, as do so many studies in this field, with a call for a change in the culture of research: "There are many individuals currently working in contract research who have, de facto, a research career, having been there for many years. There would be more, were it not for the absence of job security and poor opportunities for career progression. Changing the culture is a prerequisite of developing research careers".¹³ Later in this report we consider to what extent these sentiments are relevant to the likely future needs of the LIS world.
- 2.13 Two other agencies have also been active in this area. The Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA) has produced guides and resources for staff developers who wish to run workshops in their institution for contract research staff and their managers. Similarly, the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (ACGAS) has developed a range of materials targetted at careers advisers and individual researchers. Some such as 'University Researchers and the Job Market' aim to help those researchers who are looking for work outside higher education.
- 2.14 A review in April 2002 of the future of research in science and engineering by Sir Gareth Roberts analyses the composition of the growing number of contract researchers in these disciplines.¹⁴ It highlights the already familiar problems as a major disincentive to able graduates seeking a career in research and suggests the wide adoption of three identified career "trajectories" (industrial, academic and research associate) by institutions and graduates. The Review has other recommendations concerning more staff development and training and improved salary levels. It reports that by 2001 27 year old researchers were, on average, receiving the same salary as new graduates starting work outside higher education. As a result it recommends an increase in the starting salary for postdoctoral researchers to at least £20,000. Our survey showed that 62% of LIS project staff reported that they were earning less than this sum (although they were not reporting their salary on a common date).

¹² SHEFC (2001). Academic Research Careers in Scotland. A longitudinal study of academic contract staff, their jobs and career patterns. Available on www.shefc.ac.uk/content/shefc/research/crs/ResearchcareersinScot.pdf

¹³ op cit. Page 79.

¹⁴ Roberts, G (2002) Review of Research in Science and Engineering, DTI

Studies relating to non academic staff

- 2.15 Compared with the attention devoted to the problems of academic contract research staff little work has been done on the HR issues of non academic project staff. Some possible reasons for this are:
- That the numbers of such staff are small relative to academic researchers.
 - That the history of their involvement in contract work is relatively recent, as LIS projects have burgeoned since the Follett Report.
 - That they span a wide range of disciplines and job titles with no single dominant set of skills. Indeed, the emergence of the hybrid library and the many versions of converged structures that now exist make it hard to define a broad set of 'standard' skills for LIS staff.
 - That there is no uniformity of interest with other professionals due to barriers to mobility between different sectors of the LIS profession that lead to "people who work in different sectors not contacting or co-operating with each other".¹⁵
 - The initiatives for funding LIS projects come and go and have no relative permanence unlike most research council funding. Thus, at a future date it is conceivable that there might be no funding patrons for short term LIS activities. Even JISC, by volume the most significant funding agency, is at pains to stress its role is pump priming innovation and is reluctant to continue core funding for mainstream projects.
- 2.16 This latter point has an implication for sustainability. If the funded projects are related to the operations of a hybrid LIS service, it may well be important for the staff who work on them to be retained so that the project work can be embedded in future user services. At the very least it means that the outcomes of projects have to be fully disseminated to, and understood by, members of the LIS service.
- 2.17 In 2001 JCALT published a study on the career development of learning technology staff, another emerging group of professionals whose work overlaps in some areas with LIS project staff. The report¹⁶ estimated that there were 4,500 'learning support professionals' or staff with a learning technologies remit, and many of these are sited in information services departments. Two thirds of learning technology specialist staff were found by the study to be on permanent contracts, and it was what the report calls the "new specialists" who were more likely to be on contract terms.
- 2.18 The JCALT study of learning technology staff is of significance as it reports very similar conclusions on some HR issues to those for LIS project staff made below. In particular, it concludes that managers of the learning technology professionals are very concerned about the recruitment and retention of their specialist staff, many of the staff themselves feel undervalued and lacking academic legitimacy, and are worried by their lack of opportunities for professional development. These points apply even though the bulk of the staff involved have the security of permanent posts.

¹⁵ Dalton, P. et al (1999). Cross-sectoral mobility in the LIS profession. Library and Information Commission Research Report. Vol 19.

¹⁶ JCALT (2001) Career development of learning technology staff: scoping study. Available on <http://sh.plym.ac.uk/eds.effects/jcalt-project/>

- 2.19 Some of the recommendations of the JCALT study are also relevant to this report. Recommendation J11, for example, suggested that all funders of development projects should require the progression of project staff to be explicitly addressed in bids for funding, and recommendation SM2 proposes that middle managers should use short term contracts only where absolutely necessary as “individuals require stability, security and development over time”.
- 2.20 One of HEFCE’s Good Management Practice projects (GMP 128 – Hybrid Information Management Skills for Senior Staff – HIMSS) has considered the skills needed by senior managers in the LIS profession. Unsurprisingly, it concludes that “well developed generic management skills and personal qualities are the most important attributes for a successful head of information services to possess”.¹⁷ The report also suggests that “the career ladder in library, and particularly in computing functions, tended to value the development of technical skills up to senior levels of management”. This is a reminder that staff development programmes at all levels must not forget to cover generic management and 'soft' skills; the acquisition of technical skills alone will not produce a cadre of LIS leaders.

Legislative changes

- 2.21 In recent years some key legislative changes have affected the rights of project staff and career research staff, and this may have helped to better their position. Two changes are likely to have particular significance for LIS project staff: improvements in the position of part time staff which have been in place since 2000 (15% of the staff surveyed were part time), and new regulations on fixed term staff which will come into effect in October 2002. A useful short summary of new legislation relevant to staff on fixed term contracts is provided in a guidance paper for HEIs produced by the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff¹⁸.
- 2.22 The Part-time Work Regulations 2000¹⁹ seek to ensure that part-time staff are employed on terms and conditions pro-rata to those of comparable full-time staff. This means that provisions for annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave, sabbatical leave, superannuation benefits, reimbursement of expenses, probation arrangements, support for study and promotion opportunities should all be comparable with the equivalent arrangements for full-time project staff. Although our survey shows that only a small proportion of LIS project staff work on a part-time basis, they can now benefit from the legislation.
- 2.23 A more significant set of changes for project staff is expected to be embodied in regulations relating to employees on fixed term contracts which will become law in

¹⁷ Dalton, P and Nankevell, C (2001). HIMSS Final Report and Recommendations. Centre for Information Research, University of Central England in Birmingham.

¹⁸ Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff, Fixed Term and Casual Employment Guidance for HEIs, June 2002

¹⁹ In full their title is: Part-time Work – Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment Regulations 2000. They can be found on www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/si/si2000/20001551.htm

October 2002.²⁰ These regulations bring the UK into line with a European Union Directive of 1999, and will be far reaching as regards project staff since they:

- Prohibit employers from discriminating against fixed term employees who have to be employed no less favourably than comparable permanent staff.
- Amend the Employment Rights Act of 1996 and abolish the redundancy waiver clause so that staff can no longer sign away their rights to a redundancy payment.
- Introduce the concept of a “task contract” so that when a contract terminates on completion of a particular task, the termination is regarded in law as a dismissal.
- Seek to prevent the use of successive fixed term contracts by setting a limit of four years, starting after October 2002.
- Require that employers inform fixed term employees of permanent vacancies and provide access to appropriate training.

2.24 The Bett Report²¹ was a strong supporter of a better deal for fixed term and casual staff. “We believe”, it reported, “that significantly more staff could be offered ‘permanent’ [ie. open-ended] contracts. This will require greater management effort to redeploy staff, and greater risk of redundancy, when particular research projects and courses come to an end, but this will be offset by the likely quality gains and by a reduction in recruitment activity”. Bett also recommended the removal of the redundancy waiver clause from the contracts that fixed term contract staff were expected to sign. Since that report several universities have undertaken independent action and have decided to remove the clause, but it has still remained in many leading institutions, including some of our case study institutions.

2.25 Universities do not need to wait for legislation before acting to improve the position of contract research staff. In June 2002 for example Robert Gordon University agreed with the Association of University Teachers that from August 2002 all contract research staff will be called academic research staff and will have open ended permanent contracts.²² This is thought to be the first such agreement in the UK. It is not known whether the new form of contract will apply to LIS project staff, but as those offered are modelled on an academic staff contract this is unlikely.

Other relevant system-wide factors

2.26 Amongst the large amount of system-wide activity currently taking place within the HR environment, there are three specific factors that are likely to influence the future employment of LIS project staff, and these are briefly noted.

2.27 First, is the requirement of the funding bodies that institutions should become more strategic in dealing with HR issues, itself a response to DfES policy. In England this has taken the form of a requirement that approved institutional HR strategies should

²⁰ In full their title is: Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002.

²¹ Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions (The Bett Report), paras 213-223. London, Stationary Office, 1999

²² Details are on www.aut.org.uk/campaigns/cascamp/rgu.html

be submitted to HEFCE by June 2002. Six criteria exist by which the acceptability of such strategies are to be judged: cost-effective action to address recruitment and retention issues; staff development to meet future needs; developing equal opportunities targets; conducting regular reviews of staffing needs; annual performance reviews that are reward based; and action to tackle poor performance. In Scotland, there are broadly similar requirements being placed upon institutions, although SHEFC is not providing bespoke funds for the purpose and is asking HEIs to develop and implement human resource strategies as a condition of their grant.

- 2.28 Although a strategic approach to HR should - almost by definition - help to address some of the issues raised in this report, this cannot be assumed. An evaluation of initial strategies for HEFCE has shown that many of those submitted were unacceptable in some way, with proposed strategies often lacking rigour and the data required for a genuinely strategic analysis. That evaluation appears to indicate a wide variation in HR practice between HEIs, something confirmed in our own data collection on the specific concerns of LIS project staffing. Moreover, the data presented below suggest that problems concerning LIS project staff frequently result not only from inadequate HR strategy, but also poor operational implementation.
- 2.29 Clearly if HR strategies within the LIS environment are to have any meaning they will need to be integrated with institutional LIS strategies. We found little evidence of this happening in any systematic way in the case study institutions visited.
- 2.30 Second, the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff has recently published guidance to HEIs on fixed term and casual employment, partly in preparation for the implementation of the new legislative requirements noted above. These guidelines note that fixed term regulations "will require a major overhaul of the way they are employed in the future, resulting in a significant transfer to and use of indefinite contracts"²³ However, although the use of these guidelines should mean that all HEIs are at least aware of their legal responsibilities, their consistent implementation may be a problem as most relevant trade unions are opposed in principle to the use of fixed term contracts, and cooperation with local procedures cannot be assumed.
- 2.31 Third, a new job evaluation scheme - HERA²⁴ is being introduced in participating HEIs, and this has been designed to apply to all higher education staff. When implemented, it should address some concerns noted below about project staff grades and salaries, the comparability of project work in comparison to 'mainstream' LIS services, and possible management allowances for project leaders. The application of HERA to LIS project staff could be usefully tested as part of its implementation process.

²³ Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff, *ibid*

²⁴ For details see www.hera.ucea.ac.uk

3. Project Staff and Project Directors – a Summary of Research Findings

Introduction

- 3.1 In this Chapter data is presented on project directors and project staff drawn from the two surveys, visits to institutions and the various discussions in focus groups and elsewhere. The Chapter starts with project staff and reviews the key HR issues which affect them, including their recruitment, job security and the staff development and support they receive. The Chapter continues with a review of issues concerning project directors, including their management of staff, the career development help they provide, relationships with funders, and the institutional support they receive.

Project staff

- 3.2 It is clear that many of the HR issues affecting LIS staff are common to all fixed-term contract staff in the sector. The findings from the Scottish studies on academic contract research staff and the work of the UUK/OST Concordat are tackling similar issues on a broader front. However as noted in Chapter 1, most LIS project staff are not typically considered by HR departments to be within the contract research staff category, and hence fall outside the framework of the Concordat. The work they do is not usually 'research' in nature, but closer to practice. Project staff therefore tend to be focused on developmental work, and not destined for an academic career.
- 3.3 One key point is that it may be necessary to distinguish between those institutions where the LIS function is active in projects and those where it is not. There seems to be a relatively small group of HEIs who regularly receive funding in this field, and have developed a small cadre of competent, regular project or research staff. Some of these institutions appear to have managed to develop solutions to some of the HR issues, not least by achieving a critical mass of this kind of staff. Some quite large, well-endowed, institutions seem to do less project work of this kind than one would expect, and for them the HR issues may need a different solution.
- 3.4 The survey has given the following profile data on those LIS project staff who replied (see Appendix II):
- 45% were aged 30-39 and 20% between 25-29.
 - Most have a masters degree and very few have a PhD.
 - 56% earn less than £20,000.
 - 85% are full time.
 - 80% are in a superannuation scheme.
 - Most have been in their project for less than two years.
 - 10% have permanent posts and the rest are on contract.
 - 68% are on fixed-term contracts of either one year or two years in length.
 - 62% of staff have worked on contracts for less than 5 years, and 26% have been engaged in similar work for 5-10 years.
 - 49% of those who had worked on another project had done so in the same institution.
 - 52% had never applied for a job outside higher education.
 - 20% have had gaps between projects with no pay.

- 3.5 Before reviewing the main implications of the surveys, it is important to look at the composition of the responses on which the findings are based. This affects the conclusions that can be drawn and, to some extent, the nature and scale of recommendations made.
- 3.6 We sought to find project staff from 457 projects which covered an extremely wide range of topics over a seven year period. There is no accurate data source on how many staff were involved in these projects altogether, but it can be estimated that the 138 respondents were part of a population of about 400.²⁵ Extrapolating this ratio of staff per project across all the projects results in a figure of about 1,300 people. However, this does not take account of the fact that 68% of the respondents had worked on other projects before and, indeed, 20% had been on three or more such projects. In all therefore we may be considering a total population of project staff covered by this study of around 1,000²⁶. The difficulty in contacting project staff who have left higher education means that the survey responses are skewed to those remaining within the sector.
- 3.7 It is clear from both from the spread of projects covered by the survey, and the skills reported by the 138 project staff themselves, that the projects involve staff with a very wide range of technical and professional skills. The largest groupings of responses were from those with the following specialisms:

• Cataloguing	63
• Retrospective catalogue conversion	56
• Web content	55
• Infrastructure/access	20
• Digitisation	17

The numbers of respondents with more advanced technical skills are less than 20 in each case which restricts the scope for reaching any conclusions on these specialisms.

Recruitment

- 3.8 Generalisations about the recruitment of project staff are difficult because projects cover a wide range of skills sets and different scarcity factors or economic pressures apply to each. Thus, just over 40% of project directors responding to the survey believe that it is getting harder to recruit staff now than five years ago, while a similar proportion believes that the recruitment position has not changed over the period.
- 3.9 Project work is perceived by the staff involved to have many advantages. The work is usually thought to be challenging, innovative, exciting, good for a career and a CV, and offering fulfillment. People expect to learn a lot, expect good development opportunities to arise, and for some, achieving a 'foot in the door' is regarded as important in trying to secure a permanent post. It is also for these reasons that many

²⁵ This is done by using the respondents' figures for the size of their project team. (see Appendix II).

²⁶ This can be compared with the 3,278 library professional posts and 6,877 library/information assistants reported to SCONUL's annual Library Statistics in 1999-2000 by 98 libraries.

post holders consider that it is possible for institutions to recruit on what are perceived to be low salaries and to provide poor job security, despite several other well known disadvantages. The majority of answers given to our question regarding the advantages of this kind of work can be summarised under the following headings:

- It is beneficial experience, enhancing overall skills level and CVs.
- It offers fulfillment from working in a diverse and challenging academic environment.
- It offers the chance to concentrate on one project at a time and in a project environment.
- Respondents simply enjoy this type of work, considering it to be fulfilling through involvement in innovation, that is often at the leading edge.
- The opportunity to network with fellow staff workers, to travel and to work flexible hours.

Others note the opportunity to develop project management skills.

- 3.10 Recruitment to the recent batches of project programmes (eLib, RSLP) has been problematic for a number of institutions. Some project directors accept this as inevitable, while others consider the problem to be unrelated to fixed-term posts. A genuine skills shortage within some areas of the profession (specialist cataloguers, archivists and linguists) is possibly being compounded by the 'bunching' of job advertisements which results when more than one funder releases resources simultaneously. When these programmes come to an end, there is the additional problem of a 'glut' of such specialists on the job market. Where general IT skills are needed, the outside market may be a competitor, but very specialist IT projects may rely on a pool of staff who intend to stay in higher education. Even core traditional skills (eg cataloguing) which are no longer heavily emphasised by departments of LIS are in short supply. To compensate, some libraries have looked beyond the LIS profession to fill their posts, but candidates' ignorance of libraries has then sometimes been an issue.
- 3.11 In the case studies geography was identified as a key factor in recruiting, as few staff want to move to an institution in another region for a short-term project. Moves to London with its higher accommodation prices are particularly unattractive. Notable regional differences are reported, for example one university library in the south of England reported on the keenness of people to apply for library jobs, the over-qualified nature of many of the applicants, and the resulting long 'short-lists'.
- 3.12 It is common for institutions to use secondment from within as a means to fill project posts. 'Backfilling' of an operational post is often considered to be easier (and quicker) than recruiting externally to a project post, and carries obvious staff development opportunities for core staff. This approach also helps to deal with the loss of time to a project which can arise as a result of slow university recruitment procedures. Without secondment as an option, projects frequently tend to get off to a delayed start and have, subsequently, to ask for an extension. Secondment from core staff, on the other hand, provides security of input to the project and softens the edge of the start and finish dates.

Job security and reward

- 3.13 For funders, retention of staff on projects has clearly been a major issue. Of the 53 RSLP projects, for example, 20 applied for extensions largely due to staff turnover. The Academic Research Careers in Scotland project reported that at any one time 40% of project staff were actively seeking a job. Similarly 65% of project directors in this survey report project staff have left during their contract period. An expectation seems to exist among many project staff that they will not be able to see the end of their project due to the need to find their next contract or permanent post before then. This becomes very problematic for both employer and employee when the contract is a short one. Of those project staff who responded to the survey, 54% knew of no one within the institution who could take over from them if they were to leave.
- 3.14 Job security - either through permanent or longer term contracts - is one of the greatest worries of project staff and the main reason for turnover. This was expressed in the survey responses as the prime disadvantage to project work and was evident in almost all responses. Central to this concern was the effect that such uncertainty had on the individual, for example, the inability to make personal commitments, such as buying a house. Some staff reported a constant level of stress due to worry about the next contract. While this kind of work may be considered desirable by recently qualified staff, security becomes a concern as project staff get older and begin to put down roots. Our data suggests that 27% of survey respondents have been employed on a series of contracts for more than five years, and some of those who wish to stay in project work manage a desperate mix of short-term work punctuated by periods of uncertainty, and sometimes unemployment. We met one project manager who had been on short-term contracts for 16 years before receiving a permanent contract. The five year experience shown below is not exceptional:

Miss X: a typical project career?

Sept 96 to Oct 99	Contract on NFF project, two extensions.
Nov 99 to Mar 00	New contract, Phase I, private donor project, one extension.
Break	Made redundant. Two months.
May 00 to Oct 00	Taken back. Contract for Donor. Phase II.
Nov 00	Three weeks casual pay.
Nov 00 to May 01	Contract for Donor. Phase III.
May 01 to Nov 01	Contract for Special Collections RSLP Internal.
Dec 01	Post made permanent

- 3.15 The recent employment legislation and the forthcoming regulations on fixed-term contract staff may change views on job security. Currently, however, policies being adhered to by some institutions are a cause for concern. The survey results reveal that 82% of project staff did not know about their institution's policy in relation to job security/redundancy. Also some institutions were not always being wholly open in their dealings with staff on matters such as redundancy and other employment rights. The ignorance of many staff about their actual legal rights in the context of continued

employment of fixed term contracts was notable, although perhaps not surprising. We return to this point later in Chapter Four.

- 3.16 A common concern of project directors is the damage to the project and the costs in time and money which result when project staff leave earlier than their full term in the interests of greater job security. Not only is it very disruptive for all of the project team, but it makes timely completion of a project very difficult. If a replacement is sought, it adds to the time and cost burden within the institution. In addition, no account is taken of the loss of knowledge (often of collections) to the organisation of the departure of these staff. However, as with many of these issues LIS projects are not unique in this regard, rather it is a commonplace occurrence within a project environment.
- 3.17 Pay levels were described as poor in the survey responses, and only 8% of respondents were paid more than £25,000 pa. 80% staff belong to a pension scheme as part of their contract. Although salaries are generally low, people still apply and employers consider that commitment and interest are the primary factors assisting this. Inconsistencies in pay and conditions of service exist across the sector however, which is unhelpful when teams are drawn from a number of institutions.
- 3.18 Higher salaries do not always make a difference, and do not appear to be the prime motivator for this group. One survey respondent told us "...high income has never been a motivating factor. I am able to do intelligent, innovative work among intelligent people – and that's a great thing. If contract work became as 'safe', bureaucratised and controlled as much permanent work is now, it would lose much of its interest and excitement." Therefore the issue is complex.
- 3.19 The process of competitive bidding for funding may be another factor that keeps salaries depressed, since it is perceived that the inclusion of posts that are too highly graded may result in the loss of a contract. For the staff employed, this can become a major issue as they may have gained experience which is not recognised financially. One individual commented "when you leave a project and join another, the salary drops to the bottom of the scale again. This is very demotivating and makes me want to leave the library profession. I get no recognition for my excellent technical and interpersonal skills." Finding a career path becomes difficult in these circumstances. Another individual commented that, when applying for a permanent position as a cataloguer, "the application was turned down in favour of someone with less qualifications and skills, because I had spent too long working on short term projects." The adoption by institutions of HERA (see Chapter 2) should - to some extent - avoid this problem over staff grading in proposals, and there are implications for funding bodies that are considered in Chapter 5.
- 3.20 Retention of project staff with key skills is closely connected to the mainstreaming or embedding of the project they were working on, and this appears to be rare. 48% of survey respondents reported that they have sought work outside the HE sector in the past and 64% claim that they will do so at the end of their current project. However, such comments raise as many questions about the quality of institutional management and project direction as they do about the nature of fixed term contracts. The main reason given for this was the search for increased job security.

However, there is, in fact, little evidence to suggest that there is significant movement of staff outside higher education. 49%, for example, have had more than one contract in either the same department or elsewhere in the same institution, and an additional 27% have worked in another HE institution. The reasons given for this by staff were as follows:

- Enjoyment of the work and a preference for HE over other fields.
- Commitment to the projects in which they were involved.
- Hope of securing a permanent position.
- Their skills restricted them to the HE sector.
- Better pay (a small number).
- Convenient hours.

From a broader perspective greater movement between higher education and other sectors may be desirable as a way of enhancing the skills base of some LIS staff.

- 3.21 Survey responses relating to the exit of staff, nonetheless, showed a huge range of attitudes, from perseverance to frustration, as the following shows:

Question: When the project ends, what will you do?

I will do whatever it takes to keep on working.

I will look for ways to extend the project.

I will keep on applying while on projects – no loyalty offered, no loyalty given.

I will fall into despair and disillusionment with the profession as a whole.

Development, training and support

- 3.22 All project staff responding to the survey reported that they received some staff development, and the most common forms in which they had participated were:

- Technical training related to the project (64%).
- Induction (54%).
- Presentation skills (19%).

A low participation (13%) in project management skills training is notable, as is the almost total absence of assistance with bid-writing (4%), or financial/cost management (4%).

- 3.23 In general, project staff appear to feel that in this respect they are treated equitably with core staff, although eligibility criteria are often applied with a need to demonstrate a close fit between training applied for and the current role. In addition, some expect to have to have been employed for some time before they can become eligible for staff development and training opportunities.

- 3.24 The main problem relating to staff development and training provision lies in making the time available for such opportunities, given the pressures on projects to meet targets and deadlines. This release of time is a major issue and particularly affects

opportunities for longer absences to attend conferences etc. Project staff also often want broader job roles with opportunities to join in core activities to increase variety, increase employment opportunities, and increase contact with people. Such involvement is often seen as a distraction from the project by directors and funders.

- 3.25 The career aspirations of project staff cover a broad range of possibilities. The majority of survey respondents focused on the further development of their specialist skills, either within the sector (23%) or anywhere (25%). Only 14% aspired to a management position in a library or information service. Others refer to plans for academic study, career breaks, having children and to having no firm plans at all.
- 3.26 Assistance with 'exit' planning as such tends to be limited, although some institutions are beginning to use redeployment registers, and even to find continuation funding where a gap between one contract and the next can be identified. That said, only 9% of survey respondents thought that they could get advice on forthcoming project vacancies. If career counselling is available, most project staff do not avail themselves of the opportunity (16% only), and interviews on the point of departure are almost unheard of (less than 1%). The team came across one project director who spent 25% of his time looking for next employment for the rest of his team. This is probably unusual.
- 3.27 Awareness among project staff of the support offered by the institution was generally low, although comments from survey respondents ranged from those who told us that no help was available, and that they would not expect it anyway, to those who praised their project director for being creative and supportive in finding new work. Only 15% knew that they could get advice on seeking a new job and 12% knew they could receive job interview training. 47% simply did not know what help the institution centrally could provide. This may be due to such support being non-existent, rather than poorly promoted.
- 3.28 It is clear that there is a wide gulf in practice between the best and the worst institutions in this respect and that the identification of institutional good practice has already been done by the work of the UUK/OST Concordat. The issue now is to ensure that it applies equally to academic contract research staff and LIS project staff.

Project directors – management of staff

- 3.29 The population of 65 project directors in the survey (Appendix I) had the following characteristics:
- The majority were permanent staff (54%).
 - 70% worked in the LIS function.
 - 59% were over 45 years in age.
 - 22% were managing more than two projects at the current time.
 - 17% had directed more than 5 projects in the past.
 - Only 10% regarded themselves as career project managers.

3.30 Recruitment, and then retention, of staff have proved the greatest difficulty for the management of projects. No project director considers that there has been 'a lot of choice' in the recruitment of their project staff, but as we note above there is an almost even division of view about whether or not the number of applicants had been reasonable. A similar split in viewpoint is evident when this situation is compared with the strength of candidates for such posts in the past. The most difficult area in which to recruit appears to have been in retrospective cataloguing, possibly because of the large number of such projects which were funded simultaneously. Other particular shortages identified are of archivists and conservators. These are felt to be exacerbated by a reluctance of staff to relocate for project work, particularly when the duration of the project is short. That a large number of advertisements for project posts coincide with one another simply serves to compound these existing problems, making recruitment extremely difficult, and the ability to keep staff, even more so.

3.31 Successful appointments in areas where skills are in short supply can often prove short-lived, simply due to the fast turnover which so often then ensues. One finding which sums up a major human resource problem is that 65% of project directors report that project staff had left during their projects. The most common specific reason given for this is that staff wanted to move to another job elsewhere (83%), and not always in the last six months of the project (45%). 55% of project staff left well before this time.

3.32 Most directors (68%) generally blame job insecurity as the most important factor affecting recruitment, and subsequent retention, of staff. Other reasons are cited below:

Job insecurity	68%
Absence of a career path	37%
Levels of pay	37%
Comparative attractiveness of jobs outside HE	21%

3.33 A small minority of project directors feel that the long working hours, contractual conditions of employment, or the institution's lack of regard for project work have any influence on staff leaving.

3.34 Although staff losses can be highly damaging to project outcomes, 41% of directors, believe that nothing could be done to avoid this. Some feel that to offer permanent positions is the only answer, while others think that a proactive attempt to plan, and better structure of bidding for new projects would help. Longer term funding (to the end of the contract) in order to offer, at least, as long a contract as possible, combined with increased levels of pay at the end of a project are also thought to be effective tools in retaining staff. The idea of a central agency employing a pool of skilled workers has also been mooted as a way of helping to fill gaps created by sudden absences and of increasing the job security for those involved. Another solution put forward was for funders to permit projects to retain any underspending to help to meet funding gaps and shortfalls. Another idea is to introduce 'golden handcuffs' as a financial incentive for staff to stay until the end of the project.

- 3.35 Other issues relating to the management of project staff are, in many ways, very similar to those relating to management of core staff. The workload associated with the former may, however, be expected to be greater due to the administrative demands of short contracts and high turnover, strict deadlines, greater use of set targets, increased use of part-time staff, sharper learning curves and shorter time frame. In terms of opportunities, such as staff development, performance review, etc, the same standards should reasonably be expected to apply to both groups.
- 3.36 There is some evidence that fixed-term project staff may be perceived differently from core staff within the organisation in which they are working. LIS managers have to ensure that staff within this group are not seen as 'second class citizens', or regarded as peripheral to core activity and a drain on administrative resources. This requires some action and cannot be left to chance.
- 3.37 Management of externally funded, fixed-term, projects appears to operate most effectively where the project director is a fully funded project post. A number of projects have sought to keep costs down by absorbing this work within existing (core) management structures. With experienced managers this can also work well, and it offers good development opportunities for core staff. However, not all LIS departments appear to be sufficiently discerning in their choice of project director, and a number of projects have slipped for these reasons. In addition, problems can arise as a result of over-burdening existing managers by adding project management to their portfolio of responsibilities. Even secondments have been a problem in some cases. Where weak members of the core staff have been moved into project teams to provide movement within the structure, the poor performance issue simply transfers with them. Alternatively, libraries are known to pull staff from project work to cover main library services when shortages occur. The likely effect on the project is obvious in such circumstances.
- 3.38 Generally, strong performance management appears to be lacking in project teams, and a fairly laissez-faire position is sometimes adopted. There will be circumstances, of course, when this relates to the culture of the library as a whole. Performance review, however, is not as strongly embedded in many cases for fixed-term staff as it is for those on permanent contracts. One project manager reports "I am forced to take shortcuts, and rely on the staff to just get on with it. I do hold monthly meetings, but these are conducted bottom up, not top down". Project staff describe the effect on their motivation of such an approach, and the increased feeling of isolation engendered by it. Only 35% of those project staff surveyed claim to have regular performance review and advice on performance, for example, and the same low number claim to receive a formal annual appraisal interview.
- 3.39 Project managers have, in many cases, received training for their roles. 69% had been trained in project management, 66% in managing people, and 66% in staff appraisal. The special training in project management which was made available through the RSLP programme was valued highly, but some funders have subsequently accepted that a greater degree of importance needs to be attached to project management than hitherto, and that with hindsight, management arrangements in some early projects should have been examined more closely before funding was made available. Gaps in knowledge and experience identified by

the team include general human resource management practice and, more specifically, the area of contract employment and performance management.

Project managers – support for career development and at exit

- 3.40 The majority of case study LIS departments appear to show a great interest in the career needs of fixed-term project staff, and recognise the need to broaden their skills. However, only 31% of survey respondents among project staff claim to have received advice on training and development during the life of the project. In terms of meeting development needs, 38% of directors have access to funds for training and development of project staff. Most often this appears to be managed from the core LIS budget, and is an indication that project staff are, in this regard, treated no differently from core staff.
- 3.41 Most of the project managers claim that their staff are able to join in all the usual training activities of the LIS staff. However there is some uncertainty about the attitude of funding bodies to the inclusion of realistic provision for staff development in project budgets. Consequently, most applicants for external project funding appear not to have considered the possibility of including such costs in their funding bids. Some project directors think that funders do not give enough weight to staff development and do not encourage this to be fully costed in budgets.

Project directors - bidding and planning

- 3.42 65% of project directors who responded to the survey provide suggestions with regard to the funders' ability to deal with some of the issues concerning the employment of project staff. The most common suggestions relate to the funding duration and the need to be able to offer satisfactory levels of pay. Directors also seek a simplification of the bidding process, and a reduction in the spaces between projects so that overlapping/follow-on of contracts could become more feasible, and the opportunity to transfer project staff from one project to another more likely. In addition, a closer connection between the bidding process and the availability of funds is sought. Several respondents call for 'joined-up planning' between the various funding bodies, and complain that institutions were unable to advertise and appoint until the financial resources have been secured either by the funding body or their institution. This can mean that a project has officially begun, but the crucial staff will not be in post until 3-6 months after the start date.
- 3.43 Other suggestions made include the need to increase overall funding per project to more realistic levels, in order to cover all staff-related costs. There is also a call for financial flexibility in the funding provided to allow for benefits for staff such as maternity leave and their annual salary increases. Some directors think that secure funding for the whole duration of the project, rather than having to renew the funding agreement on a 6-12 month basis, would enable longer term contracts to be given. This would allow individuals to focus their energy on the project rather than on seeking their next job. One project worker told us 'the number of contracts I have had is far greater than the number of projects I have worked on, and this is an important issue.'

- 3.44 In addition, based on our discussions with project directors, we have identified some areas where further improvements could be made, particularly in the accuracy and realism of cost information provided by applicants for funding. Naturally the competitive bidding process encourages institutions to cost low, but if recruitment then fails, it is not uncommon for LIS departments to use the savings (resulting from the delay) to pay higher rates. The problem with this is that the overall delay to the project starting date causes difficulties later, if the completion date remains unaltered.

Project directors - institutional support

- 3.45 Institutional policies are sometimes seen by project directors to work against them in attempts to attract external project funding. Only 15% of survey respondents have heard of the UUK/OST Research Careers Initiative or the SHEFC Contract Research Staff Initiative, and none believe that these have had any impact on institutional policies in respect of project staff. A view expressed by some is that institutional senior management currently fail to understand the importance to the institution of LIS project work. One survey respondent believes that this is due to funders' practice in not paying overheads. Because of this, "projects are not seen as income-earning, and institutional support is therefore lacking." Another respondent thinks that high level advocacy is needed to improve the status of such project work, that does not have a "research" label.
- 3.46 Policies relating to salary levels make little allowance for changes in market forces and the possible need to pay a premium for scarce skills, even if the project budget will stand it. Centrally held staffing budgets, for example, will leave no scope for creating a fund to deal with contract problems when they arise. 23% of directors report the creation of a small bridging fund for staff who are between two contracts, to meet additional recruitment costs, adjust their pay, and to meet potential redundancy payments. However, the opportunity to pay salary supplements or to provide temporary employment between contracts is almost non-existent.

4. Institutional HR Policies and Practice

Introduction

- 4.1 In this Chapter we draw observations on how institutional HR policies and practice influence and support LIS projects and their staff. Data are drawn from three main sources: our institutional visits; survey data of both project staff and project managers; and other evaluation reports which have noted the personnel implications of short term project funding (see bibliography).
- 4.2 At the outset it needs to be noted that there is no standard approach to the implementation of HR policies or the operation of the HR function within HEIs. The operation and size of the HR function, the number of professionally qualified staff employed, and the range of tasks that are undertaken vary widely, and the demands placed upon the function range from the complex staffing environments of the large research-oriented universities with medical schools through to small higher education colleges with relatively homogenous staffing profiles. Within institutions the key influences on HR policy also differ widely: in some cases authority resides in the director of the HR function, in other cases at Pro-Vice-Chancellor level (or similar), and in other cases policy is determined relatively collegially with the central HR function more narrowly limited to implementation of decisions taken locally. It is therefore difficult to generalise about HR practice, so that we concentrate on issues that result directly from our data.
- 4.3 Local circumstances also play a large part in determining the need for HEIs to be proactive in seeking to address the HR issues concerning project staffing. Recruitment patterns vary widely within different geographical areas, with the exception of a small number of very specialist areas (eg rare language cataloguers). Similarly the influence of salary and reward levels on recruitment and staff satisfaction also varies. These influences also appear to play an important part in determining the overall approach of institutions to HR matters, with those who have not found recruitment difficult for local reasons perhaps understandably less proactive in seeking to develop good practice in a range of areas.
- 4.4 Broadly within the case study institutions, three types of approach are evident in addressing the specific needs of LIS project staffing:
- a) Centralised: In these institutions the HR function is centralised, and all matters concerning the appointment and contractual position of LIS project staffing are dealt with through relatively standardised procedures. The best centralised services that we visited were able to provide a range of activities to support LIS staff, thus helping to ensure that they were fully integrated into the institution, and treated like any other staff member - a frequent complaint by some project workers who often reported isolation. Conversely, the worst of the centralised HR functions imposed inappropriate norms for project costs and staffing, provided poor service, misleading advice, and did little to encourage good practice at the level of service provision.

- b) Devolved: In these institutions the central HR function typically devolves decisions concerning contract staff either to faculty personnel officers or to the heads of operational services, in this case to the head of LIS. In a few cases the units hosting projects were relatively autonomous and did not need the approval of central authorities before seeking external funding. In our case study institutions this approach has the potential advantage of enabling speedier action to be taken on appointments and other issues and locating HR operations nearer to the point of service operation, but may it discourage the adoption of standard institution-wide good practice for contract staff.
- c) Ad-hoc: We found several examples where the appointment of LIS project staff was dealt with in an ad-hoc manner, particularly where existing staff were transferred to projects. Such an approach has the advantage of flexibility, but it may reinforce feelings of staff isolation as LIS project workers are seen to be a special case. It may also mean that such staff are not fully incorporated into basic institutional systems until some time after appointment (for example, we found several examples of project staff not being listed in the telephone directory until late in a project's life).

Each of these approaches has potential advantages and drawbacks, and it is impossible to conclude that one is better than another. However, what is important is that the approach used is carefully considered, and does not just arise from the unthinking use of standard institutional procedures.

- 4.5 As noted above in previous sections, our survey data suggests that the quality of HR practice varies widely in many HEIs, and in some cases is poor in the perception of both LIS project staff and their managers. However, it needs to be acknowledged that much of the work of HR services may be unrecognised, for example, the need to ensure legal compliance in all staffing matters. Moreover, staff and managers are usually dependent on HR services for both legal and good practice advice, and may not be in a position to comment accurately on the technical appropriateness of service delivery.
- 4.6 In general, those institutions which had well developed policies and practices for dealing with contract research staff and appeared to provide the best quality of support for LIS project staff had tried to apply the 'spirit' of the research Concordat to other project and fixed term contract staff. However, most do not formally apply the Concordat to LIS project staff as they are not deemed to be researchers. In identifying some of the central issues leading to the effectiveness of HR operation, in the following comments we try and identify the best practice that we found and contrast it with the worst.

The use of fixed term contracts

- 4.7 There are a number of sources of guidance on when fixed term contracts should be used (for example, the Concordat), almost all of which emphasise when it is appropriate and when not. Of course, the use of fixed term contracts is itself

controversial and is generally opposed by most trade unions²⁷. The job insecurity associated with fixed term contracts was cited by two-thirds of project managers replying to our survey as the main difficulty faced in recruiting and retaining project staff. The best case study HEIs we visited had clear guidelines on the use of fixed term contracts, and appeared to apply them consistently to ensure that staff were not disadvantaged. Conversely, the worst HEIs were much more ad-hoc in the use of fixed term contracts, and appeared to use them primarily as a way of attempting to reduce any risk falling upon the institution, while seeming to give relatively little thought to the implications for the staff concerned.

Policy on the use of fixed term contracts

One university states its policy on the use of fixed term contracts very clearly in its Staff Administration Manual, which is available to all on the Intranet.

It begins with the statement "The University aims to employ all staff on an open-ended basis in every appropriate circumstance" and then goes on to list those reasons why fixed term contracts may sometimes be necessary. Any person wishing to make a fixed term contract appointment has to state the reason "sufficient to demonstrate that the use of such a contract is justified in the spirit of this policy and in legal terms."

The policy states clearly that "the University has agreed with the recognised trade unions not to ask staff on fixed term contracts to waive rights to redundancy pay". The policy also makes full reference to the Bett Report and all the relevant legislation described in Chapter 2.

- 4.8 Of particular concern to us was the lack of knowledge by project staff about institutional policy on job security, with 84% of project staff respondents to our survey reporting that they did not know what the policy of their institution was concerning giving job security to contract researchers. Whatever the reasons for this figure - and our data tentatively suggest that it is a combination of the information not being produced and not being read where it is produced - such a figure is unacceptable, and suggests a degree of institutional complacency about the position of LIS project staff which is outside the 'spirit' of the Concordat.
- 4.9 However, behind the concerns of project managers about the impact of fixed term contracts lies an important question: if institutions are genuinely committed to the expansion of hybrid LIS systems, why are they not prepared to make modest investments in retaining the scarce skills of project workers? With the exception of the relatively small number of very specialist staff for whom there may be a genuine temporary need, there appears to be a number of possible answers: first, that real institutional commitment to the expansion of LIS does not exist. Second, that institutional commitment (as opposed to LIS commitment) to embedding project outcomes does not exist. Third, that the skills of project workers do not have a high enough priority over other activities, in which case the strategic decision to have

²⁷ For a discussion of the issues of fixed term contracts from a trade union perspective see www.aut.org.uk

participated in the project in the first place appears questionable. Fourth, that a funding environment which encourages multiple short term initiatives across the whole range of institutional activity, develops over time a casual rather than a strategic approach to implementation. All these factors are likely to play a part, but the influence of the funding environment is widely felt by managers to be destructive; as one observed "the whole project funding system has been skewed in favour of the short term fix rather than the long term solution".

- 4.10 Practice on the payment of redundancy payments - where appropriate - appears to vary. Some institutions included provision for redundancy payments in bid proposals, while others met costs out of institutional overhead contributions to projects. We gained the impression that the worst case study institutions attempted to avoid the issue by not clarifying employee rights until particular circumstances had been drawn to their attention. We make recommendations on this below.

Recruitment and Retention

- 4.11 The position concerning recruitment and retention is very mixed, with some projects reporting very considerable difficulties and other none at all. We have already noted the importance of local and skills factors on recruitment, and many projects have also suffered from the general difficulties of being unable to recruit staff with specialist IT skills. However, many of the issues here concern not only project staff as such, but other specialist LIS staff irrespective of their contractual position. 48% of project managers report obtaining a reasonable number of applications when recruiting, and approximately equal numbers find that there has been no difference in their ability to recruit (43%) and that it has become more difficult (41%). Some project managers reported particular difficulties recruiting to eLib projects, but since then a slightly larger pool of staff may be available.
- 4.12 To the extent that concerns over job security may have exacerbated general recruitment difficulties in the LIS area, it may be that those projects that have experienced problems are the forerunners for more general system-wide difficulties that HEIs will experience in trying to recruit staff for the new LIS roles that are now emerging. It is to be expected that institutions will take account of these needs in their HR strategies, although analyses of institutional strategies show few signs that this is taking place so far²⁸.
- 4.13 In the best case study HEIs, recruitment was undertaken in ways consistent with good practice, including equal opportunities requirements. In the worst HEIs arrangements were frequently more haphazard and involved ad-hoc arrangements. As with other areas of recruitment there are often real tensions between the desire of project managers to move quickly to make appointments and the need to ensure compliance with due process.
- 4.14 A common problem is projects starting late due to difficulties with recruitment, or suffering completion problems because of staff leaving early and moving to new contracts. While the practice of the funding bodies in announcing initiatives without much warning often provides real difficulties for institutions, there is a considerable

²⁸ See HEFCE 02/14

difference in how institutions respond. The best case study HEIs demonstrated institutional commitment by moving speedily as soon as an indication of funding was announced and had often been quite specific in how they would staff a project in their bids. Conversely the slowest HEIs tended to wait until formal contractual commitment had been received (sometimes because of the specific requirements of the HR or finance office), and had no real recruitment plan.

- 4.15 So far as retention is concerned, the need to continually seek new contract funding means that project based initiatives are vulnerable to staff leaving before project completion in order to secure future employment. 65% of the project directors in our survey had been affected by this problem, but it needs to be remembered that this is in a volatile area of recruitment where there are significant external market pressures. In such cases it would be surprising - and perhaps undesirable - if some staff were not leaving for better opportunities.
- 4.16 Despite this, we found few examples of special measures being in place to try and address the problem where it exists. Two main proposals for action were cited by project managers: grants from funding bodies for longer than the project work timetable to ease pressures over seeking new contracts, and so-called 'golden handcuffs' whereby part of the salary is held back and a payment is made to staff upon project completion. Although in special cases there may be reasons to support these approaches (particularly where very special and highly marketable skills are concerned), in general institutions should be cautious about adopting such an approach within LIS - or other - services. Our survey data suggests that the majority of respondents are seeking careers in higher education LIS services and typically change contracts through need not choice. In such circumstances enlightened institutional management is likely to be a much more powerful motivational factor than relying on contractual compliance to aid project completion.

Waiver Clauses

- 4.17 The position concerning redundancy waiver clauses is controversial, and although many institutions report still using them, their legal value has been undermined by numerous legislative changes in employment law. The best case study HEIs recognised current best practice and did not use waiver clauses, nor did they seek to get project staff to waive their legal rights. However, the worst case study HEIs continued to use waiver clauses, even where they did not apply to individual staff, partly as a continuation of previous practice for all those on contracts and partly as a 'belt and braces' exercise whereby it was felt that getting staff to sign a clause would 'not do any harm' even 'if it didn't do much good'. However, we feel this approach is unfortunate, smacks of amateurism in important HR issues, and is unlikely to command the confidence of staff or managers.
- 4.18 More disturbingly, in the worst case we encountered a major research university explicitly misled project staff and managers on the status of redundancy waiver clauses. It required all staff to sign clauses, explaining to them that they were legally enforceable in circumstances where this was not the case, while acknowledging privately that this was not legally enforceable.

Bridging Funds

- 4.19 Institutions with large numbers of staff on fixed term contracts need to develop systems and funds for bridging contracts, and such requirements are likely to become commonplace after the implementation of the European Directive on Fixed Term Contracts. Although such systems can be difficult for small colleges, most LIS projects have been hosted by a relatively small number of larger institutions where project work is more common. Such funding can be a valuable way of providing some security of employment and enabling institutions to retain the services of staff with scarce skills.
- 4.20 The best case study HEIs almost all had systems for providing bridging funding between contracts for staff whom the institution wished to continue to employ. Sometimes these were centrally operated (in one case by the Vice Chancellor) and available to all contract staff (subject to local criteria), on other occasions they were operated by the LIS service, with the head of LIS willing to take a risk on future funding opportunities. Just under a quarter (23%) of project directors reported the existence of such funds at LIS level. In the worst cases the institution had no system for supporting staff between contracts, and the preferred action of the HR function was to make staff redundant and then seek to re-employ when and if new project funding was received. Even in the best performing institutions there is recognition of the difficulties of providing bridging funding for very specialist staff, and in our recommendations we make proposals for how this might be dealt with.

Staff Training and Development

- 4.21 As noted in Chapter two a large number of measures are being taken in both England and Scotland to provide staff training and development to contract research staff. Our own survey reports a majority of LIS project staff undertaking at least induction training, and project-related technical training is also common. However, finding time to participate is a common difficulty. Such training is also important in helping to develop a wider set of career skills, and enabling staff to fill new roles in the future.
- 4.22 In the best of the case study HEIs both LIS project staff and project managers had access to a full range of relevant training development programmes (for a parallel example see the courses and workshops in the Scottish Research Careers Initiative), and attempts were made to involve them in appropriate professional activities (eg local or regional librarian training). The worst HEIs provide little or no training for LIS or other contract staff, and left it almost entirely for the staff or their managers to arrange. However, 69% of survey respondents reported receiving no advice on training and development from their project manager.
- 4.23 The funding of staff development is a issue raised by some project managers, and it is widely believed that the funding bodies will not pay for staff development (see the following Chapter). In such circumstances the best case study HEIs support project training from central resources as part of the institutional overhead (even though no contribution to this is recovered from the funder), while the worst do not and require projects to pay their own costs directly. Clarification of the extent to which the funding

bodies will pay reasonable staff development costs is required, and a recommendation is made later.

Special training and support programmes for researchers

One university has a formidable array of special support for contract research staff. This includes a regular Newsletter, a web site devoted to their development needs, an information pack for new research staff, an email list for researchers, job seekers register, career contact register, a mentoring scheme and two nominated contacts in staff development and the HR functions. A career planning and review scheme has been developed to help research staff when they have problems.

The courses offered cover topics such as Making Funding Applications, Project Management, Time Management and CV Workshops.

Performance review

- 4.24 Despite the many difficulties in undertaking successful performance review, the process has both general value within HEIs, and also particular value in the context of short term projects with clear deliverables. When coupled with sound day-to-day management, performance reviews have the ability to address - and take action on - numerous issues concerning the conduct of projects. It is no surprise, therefore, that the best case study HEIs ensure that an effective system of appraisal and performance review is in place.
- 4.25 However, only 35% of project staff surveyed report participating in performance reviews, and the reality is that the majority of HEIs do not appear to apply institutional review systems to LIS project staff. There are likely to be two main reasons for this: first, that the institutional performance review scheme is often poorly implemented - a common occurrence, as appraisal in higher education is much misunderstood, often poorly conducted, and generally unpopular within academic cultures (although not within service settings such as LIS). Second, that project staff are - mistakenly - felt not to require review because of the limited nature of their contract. In fact the reverse is the case, and appraisal is often most valuable in such circumstances.

Appraisal for research staff

One University's Personnel Department has produced a booklet containing all the regulations and details of terms and conditions for academic research staff. This covers appraisal and staff development. The appraisal scheme in the university is applied every two years and the booklet relates this to research staff with a particular emphasis on the process in the fourth year. This is the time when the researcher will be "given a clear indication of the likely remaining employment period". Should this not be possible, the staff member will be offered "help with redeployment or time off for interviews to find alternative employment".

Career planning guidance at contract end

- 4.26 Our survey data reveal clearly the anxieties for staff associated with contracts coming to an end, and the uncertainties about future employment. Performance is likely to be affected, and time may well be taken in seeking future jobs. In such circumstances good employers provide systems for careers guidance, and several are now in place for contract research staff, both nationally (for example within Scotland), and run by individual institutions.
- 4.27 The best case study HEIs all have systems in place to provide such career guidance, although it may be organised in different ways, for example sometimes by the HR function, or by the careers service. One HEI we visited has a formal interview with all contract staff six months before contract termination, and then keeps in touch with staff regularly thereafter, offering a series of support and training activities designed to ease the transition to future employment. The converse unfortunately appears more common and most institutions appear to make no formal provision for career planning or 'exit' arrangements upon contract termination. In some such cases the HR function encourages such activities, but relies on project managers to undertake them, which although helpful in obvious ways also inevitably limits the range of advice available.

Careers advice service

A university careers service has created a special web site for contract research staff. This contains a News section, a registration service to be kept informed, FAQs about research careers, links to relevant web sites, access to the University's policy statements and code of practice for the employment of research staff, as well as a full description of all the support offered by the careers service itself.

- 4.28 There is much that could be done to provide collaborative career information amongst HEIs for LIS project staff. One option would be to encourage the development of an LIS section in CVs.ac.uk and the other careers advisory services that are now becoming available on the web. In the Chapter on recommendations we suggest there may be a case for funders to promote the use of such schemes among project staff.

Conclusions

- 4.29 On the whole, the activities undertaken by the 'best' institutions that we met during our visits are little more than a series of straightforward and carefully considered measures to meet their responsibilities as good employers. This is not meant to be disparaging: doing straightforward things well in a complex higher education environment is not easy. It must be emphasised however that in most cases the good practice we found was not disseminated to, or applied to, LIS project staff. CRS benefitted, but LIS staff did not (or were not automatically included). While not eliminating all problems (particularly those resulting from the policies of funding bodies, the 'good practice' institutions appear to be able to overcome some - not all -

of the typical staffing problems noted in our survey. For example one told us that their experience was that with such systems in place "staff will stay to complete a project if they find the work rewarding in itself". In general, the practice of these institutions should constitute the accepted minimum to which other institutions should aspire, and which JISC and other funding bodies should expect in awarding funding.

- 4.30 We were disappointed - but not surprised - to find numerous examples of poor practice and some instances of the 'worst' practice characterised above. It is widely recognised that much remains to be done in updating HR practice in many HEIs, and in some case study institutions it appears that relatively little progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the numerous reports on contract research staff and applying them to those in LIS.
- 4.31 In such circumstances it is tempting to argue that sweeping changes need to be made to the ways that the HR aspects of LIS projects are addressed. However, on balance, we do not believe that this is the case. Although some modest system-wide changes in funding HR-related issues are desirable (see below), the greatest benefit to project staff is likely to be by all institutions adopting the good practice currently demonstrated by a few. The requirements of compliance with new legislation on fixed term and part-time contracts are likely to help this process.

5. The Funding Bodies

5.1 While the LIS projects under review have been very widely welcomed, as we note above, they have - perhaps inevitably - brought with them a number of staffing problems. We have noted that many of these could have been better managed in many institutions, and project directors and heads of LIS services also take the view that some of the practices of the funding bodies have not been helpful to HEIs. In this Chapter we consider these and related issues.

Issues of concern

5.3 Funding body issues which are of concern to LIS services fall into four headings:

- A perceived lack of clarity about what staffing costs funders will pay for.
- Funders' policy on not paying overheads.
- The 'bunching' of projects caused by bids being invited within a narrow time frame.
- That project bidding may be an inappropriate method of funding.

We consider these in turn.

a) What staffing costs will funders pay for?

5.4 Many funding bodies prefer not to publish the detail of their preferred contract terms, and it is left to institutions to seek funding on the terms applicable in their own institution. This has obvious advantages - and on the whole we believe a desirable policy - but there are two potential difficulties: first, it may encourage under-funded proposals through a lack of guidance on what might be included within bids; and second it may lead to some resentment in collaborative programmes when project staff make comparisons between institutional funding. We believe that action can be taken on both of these drawbacks, and make proposals in the section on recommendations.

5.5 JISC and RSLP have provided limited guidance for potential bidders on how to deal with staffing issues and costs when preparing proposals, although they emphasise that value for money is one of a number of key factors in determining the success of bids. Both have paid payroll 'on-costs' (national insurance, pensions, etc) but not overheads, and the guidance of one body, JISC, does note possible problems in recruiting suitable staff to work on projects, and warns that they "are likely to be in short supply or expensive"²⁹. It also notes that proposals "will have a better chance of success if you can identify suitable staff who can be seconded", it could therefore be argued that JISC are gently encouraging the use of existing in-house staff rather than appointing new people on fixed term contracts.

5.6 All LIS project funding is competitive, and for institutions there is a tension between keeping staff costs as low as possible to compete with opposing bids, and including appropriate staffing costs to encourage the adoption of good practice. We found

²⁹ JISC, Guide to Successful Bidding for JISC Funding, August 2001, www.jisc.ac.uk

considerable confusion within the sector about what additional directly incurred staff costs - if any - could be included within bids (for example, staff development, recruitment costs, and provision for redundancy payments). Some heads of LIS services are of the view that no staffing costs other than salary and 'on-costs' are permitted, while others cite projects where other costs have been included. This may well be a position where institutions have been over-cautious in bidding, but in a competitive environment this is understandable.

- 5.7 In some institutions this confusion has led to a perception that funders have little interest in staffing issues, and one senior institutional manager said to us "their primary focus is on achieving action rather than recognising any strong sense of obligation to the project workers". We have no specific evidence that this is the case, but would hope that funders are not ignoring the interests of staff, as it will need the active co-operation of all parties to build the necessary staffing skills to support the LIS infrastructure. The development of the research staff Concordat shows the potential value of the main funders and policy bodies coming together to encourage good practice, and we make proposals as to how this might be addressed in the LIS area below.

b) Overheads

- 5.8 Funders do not pay overheads on projects because "the funding bodies believe that their payments and grants to institutions already meet the costs of office space, administration, etc"³⁰ This is a familiar debate in relation to all research funding, and we do not go into the details here, which are well known in the sector.
- 5.9 From an institutional perspective there are number of more specific concerns about the overhead position, some of which in our view are legitimate and some are not. These are:
- While the general reason for non-payment of overheads is understood (although not always accepted), there is some confusion about what might count as an overhead as opposed to a legitimate project cost, an example being provision for redundancy payments at the end of a fixed term contract. Policy here could usefully be clarified.
 - Some heads of LIS services report that a failure to recoup overheads from projects devalues them in the eyes of senior managers and as a result some HEIs may not be as flexible in considering the future needs of LIS contract staff as they would be if overheads were paid. In our experience, institutions that behave in this way are unlikely to be active in embedding project outcomes, and are placing short term financial expediency before the development of a long term LIS strategy. At the heart of this issue is the need for institutions to be much more concerned about funding requirements before bidding for projects.
 - There is a particular problem about the payment of overheads for projects which are hosted by one institution, but which are designed to benefit the system as a whole. In such circumstances unless projects are carefully budgeted initially

³⁰ See www.jisc.ac.uk

there is a danger of individual HEIs subsidising others. Staffing issues represent only one part of this situation, which may be addressed by the recognition of specific additional costs rather than overhead provision.

- 5.10 We understand that a small number of institutions have now taken the decision that they do not wish to host projects unless the overhead position is addressed. Full consideration of this falls outside our terms of reference, but if such a policy became widespread, then there is likely to be some 'fall-out' in relation to staffing, and a more uncertain environment for contract staff. Funders such as JISC could also be failing in their objective of spreading the benefits of developmental activity around the sector.

c) Bunching of Projects

- 5.11 There is general recognition of the difficulties for project staffing caused by a relatively large number of projects within a specialist area all seeking staff at approximately the same time. This was a particular problem with e-Lib and NFF programmes and had a number of serious consequences for some projects.
- 5.12 It is recognised that there is a limit to what funding bodies can do to address this issue, and much depends on the motivation for particular initiatives and the original source of funding. Thus, where funding results from a specific government priority in the annual spending round, it is difficult to see any realistic way that intermediary funding bodies can mitigate the pressures on institutions caused by inviting project submissions at the same time, or easily permit project extensions. Conversely, many LIS managers had a strong view that where initiatives were formulated by funding bodies to benefit the perceived needs of the sector, then more could be done in sequencing project implementation. As one senior manager observed "funders are not good at succession management and thinking well enough ahead of how projects will survive and retain good people when the initial funding expires".

d) Project Bidding

- 5.13 Funding institutional activities through short term projects and bidding mechanisms is controversial throughout the sector in all areas. Thus, although the benefits of the LIS projects are widely recognised, there is also considerable institutional concern about the time and costs involved in bidding, and long term issues of sustainability. The issues are well known within the sector and we do not comment on the general principles associated with bidding as a funding methodology. However, there is a specific point about staffing and the embedding of project outcomes which is evident in many HEIs: the difficulties of coping with the implementation of multiple initiatives.
- 5.14 From the perspective of the funding bodies it appears wholly reasonable that institutions should be expected to demonstrate commitment to projects by mechanisms such as meeting reasonable overheads costs, embedding outcomes, and coping with staffing issues in a responsible way. However, from an institutional perspective the problem is not achieving this within a specific project, but rather in managing the plethora of similar short term funding activities in almost all areas of institutional life. Thus institutions are expected to embed multiple project outcomes (often simultaneously) and address the conflicting needs of staff in various stages of

contract completion. As noted above, the best performing HEIs are managing to do this through a range of mechanisms, but many will inevitably resort to various ad-hoc arrangements with unsettling consequences for staff.

Conclusions

- 5.15 When taken together, these concerns about costs, project bunching and bidding raise important issues for the funding bodies on the structure of any future project initiatives, and whether any new approach is required. Increasingly projects appear to be located in a relatively small number of institutions, where local heads of LIS are prepared work within the constraints of project funding. It is only a further step on from this to recognising a specific number of centres where collaborative work on such projects might be carried out. From a staffing perspective (other issues are beyond our terms of reference) such a position is likely to be helpful in providing a greater likelihood of continued future funding than is currently the case. Conversely if the funding bodies want to encourage a wider range of HEIs to host future projects than currently do so, it will be important to address some of the recommendations made in Chapter 6.
- 5.16 There is already close contact between the funding bodies and much of the LIS sector, and many individual heads of services sit on a wide range of the funding bodies' committees. It should not therefore be difficult to find a way of discussing the issues raised above and making modest revisions to current funding practices.

6. Analysis and Recommendations

- 6.1 The general image of LIS project staff which emerges from the survey findings is that they are full time, relatively poorly paid, well qualified and working under a fixed term contract of two years or less. Two thirds of them have worked on such contracts before, and usually in higher education. Project directors are a group aged mostly over 45 with a permanent appointment, but with not a great deal of project management experience. Most of them however have had some training in this role.
- 6.2 The consistent message that emerges from the qualitative survey comments and interviews with staff is that, despite all the disadvantages of project life, it remains - for most - satisfying and challenging. However, for some the frustrations and hardships have become too much and they look for work elsewhere. Many are resigned to the situation not changing. There is a tacit acceptance that many of the difficulties are system-wide and associated with modern academic life rather than peculiar to the project, the funding body or the host institution. However, some difficulties are institutional, although, perhaps because of a lack of experience, respondents are not always able to identify what might be done to tackle problems.
- 6.3 In such circumstances, the key question to ask is: does a major problem exist in the staffing of LIS projects? To some extent the answer depends on whose views are sought. From the perspective of the staff concerned the answers are relatively predictable: the large majority want greater job security; a reduction in the frustrations of project life; and greater integration within mainstream LIS services. These aspirations would generally be supported by relevant trade unions, critical of the consequences of casualisation. Project managers would generally agree, and many have suffered from the endemic problems of project work resulting from the early departure of key staff on fixed term contracts before projects end.
- 6.4 However, from an institutional and system-wide perspective the answer is much less clear: most projects are completed with staff costs kept relatively low; there are no obvious indicators of institutional concern about shortages of LIS staff; indeed many think the issue not significant enough to identify in their HR strategy. In such cases it is tempting to conclude that the staffing problems are typical of project funding, and, although difficult for the staff concerned, just a fact of modern employment. However, this is not to say that some action should not be taken by institutions and funding bodies.
- 6.5 In paragraph 5.15 we noted that some of the staffing issues might be dealt with if the funding bodies were to move away from short term project funding to longer term support of designated centres, and that such a move has the potential to aid the retention of the skills of LIS staff within the sector. However, full consideration of such a strategy is beyond our terms of reference. In making the following recommendations we therefore assume that the project model of funding is likely to continue at least in the medium term.
- 6.6 Within the current funding methodology there are three sets of measures that would help to address many - but not all - of the issues reported above:

- Those for institutions.
- Those for heads of LIS and project directors.
- Those for the funding bodies.

Our recommendations relate almost entirely to good human resource practice. With the imminent advent of the new fixed term regulations many of the concerns of project staff about job security will be lessened; but most of their other worries relate to poor human resource practice at various levels. It is these that require attention at various levels.

- 6.7 Although the main thrust of this study was to review the human resource issues affecting LIS project staff, it was also hoped in the invitation to tender that it might be possible to “map areas where retention and recruitment is problematic”. The only reliable data on this was supplied by project managers (the number of responses from staff who have left higher education being too low to be significant). Their evidence suggests that based upon experience of past projects, the main area of concern has been retrospective catalogue conversion. There is no data on difficulties in recruitment and retention issues in current projects.

Recommendations for institutions

- 6.8 Chapter 4 has described the range of HR practices in institutions, and in case study interviews there was regular mention of inflexibilities in some of the processes operated by the institutional HR function. One obvious area of concern is to explore how the performance of the worst HEIs can be improved to the level of the best. The good practice guidance already exists for career research staff and it can be adapted to LIS staff.
- 6.9 We noted above that in most cases HEIs have not considered the staffing conditions of LIS project staff to be similar to those applying to research career staff. Although there are differences in ultimate career orientation, the contractual circumstances facing these two groups are very similar, and we recommend that HR departments apply the 'spirit' of the academic research Concordat to all relevant LIS project staff. The institution's HR policies should also ensure that fixed term project staff are treated in all respects as well as permanent staff.
- 6.10 In some cases institutions have designated a member of staff in the HR function with specific responsibility for policies and procedures for academic contract research staff. We recommend that such persons take on a similar role as regards LIS project staff and all other academic-related staff on fixed term contracts. One obligation of the postholder would be to make sure that all LIS project staff are fully and fairly informed of their employment rights and obligations. This would require liaison with the senior person in the LIS function with HR oversight.
- 6.11 There are very considerable differences in the quality of HR practices and procedures between the 'best' HEIs and the 'worst'. All HEIs should be encouraged to adopt current best practice, and any future HEFCE good practice advice on human

resource management should be encouraged to note this point³¹. The funders of this study could also sponsor a conference to disseminate and encourage evident good practice as regards LIS staff. It is important that such an event includes the interests of the FE sector, as they will be facing similar HR issues in future (see paragraph 1.11).

- 6.12 When submitting proposals to the LIS project funding bodies, HEIs should be careful to include all relevant staffing costs, including those for staff development, interview expenses, maternity-related costs and redundancy payments (where appropriate). Proposed salary costs should be realistic in order to attract staff with the necessary skills, and under-pricing of salary costs should be avoided. Individuals should never be costed at a salary lower than that which they have been receiving. Where HEIs have a central support service for those preparing proposals for funding, it would be realistic for it to develop an expertise to support bids to LIS funders.
- 6.13 The current practice on the use of fixed term contracts in LIS projects and their implications (for example, redundancy payments) appears to vary. It is likely that the new legislation will cause most HEIs to develop clear guidelines on the options available for staff on fixed term contracts when their contracts come to an end. These guidelines must be applied to all LIS project staff, but the HR function can help project directors to interpret and apply these sensitively.
- 6.13 The implications of new legislation on fixed term contracts is not well understood, and many institutions are likely to find it challenging. Bodies such as UCISA and SCONUL will need to monitor the effects of the legislation on their sector and identify its impact on the supply of qualified project staff.

Recommendations for heads of LIS and project managers

- 6.14 The most important task for LIS heads arising from this study is that they should ensure that their project staff are brought at once within institutional policies for CRS. This will require close working between the LIS head and the head of the HR function. A second key role (which is harder for the LIS head to pursue without support) is for the differences between the good practice described above and the institutional practice to be drawn to the attention of the head of the HR function.
- 6.15 Within the LIS function there are few staff who admit to being a “career project manager” and this has implications for any strategy to ensure that future such managers follow good practice. The implication is that each tranche of LIS project funding may still start largely with a cadre of relatively inexperienced project managers and it could be some years before this situation changes. Funders will therefore have to continue (and possibly strengthen) their promotion of project management training. Other models of support could also be relevant. It is interesting, for example, that JISC has never followed HEFCE’s example of creating a national co-ordination team with a role of advising, training and co-ordinating good practice among project managers. The FDTL and TQEF co-ordination teams were found by their evaluations to have provided services that were very well received by

³¹ This could be done through the consultants appointed by HEFCE to advise on HR strategies.

projects. It would require a programme of at least 50 projects to make such central support an economic service.

- 6.16 Project management training is not principally the funders' responsibility and most institutions would include this in the portfolio of professional development programmes they offer senior staff. Included in these packages would also be training on proposal writing, fund raising generally, financial management and people management. As legislation on employment becomes more relevant to project work, some support or training in this area will become an additional necessity. Understanding the obligations and options resulting from recent and pending legislation will be a key topic. The adoption of good practice as laid out in *Employing Contract Researchers: a Guide to best practice (1998)* published by the RCI would also provide an additional set of topics to include in project managers' training programmes.
- 6.17 Since most of the project directors in our survey are permanent staff (and usually in the LIS function) they should be able to take a strategic view of the career plans of their project staff. Project directors should work with their university central HR function to issue fixed term contracts for as long a term as possible, ideally for the duration of the project or even longer, if central bridging funds are available. A key decision in future will be between offering redundancy or permanent contract to project staff who have worked for more than four years. The LIS manager is usually in a more favourable position than the principal investigator of a research project and may have autonomy to identify job opportunities within the LIS function. Allied to this will be the knowledge of LIS manpower strategies and the skills needs of the service.
- 6.18 LIS managers and project directors will need to be prepared to take risks, to be as flexible and creative as possible to optimise the ability of the LIS to recruit good people, and then to be able to hang on to them. Such activities - together with any institutional analysis of skill shortages - should be part of institutional HR strategies.
- 6.19 LIS services will also need to give greater attention to the calibre of managers they recruit, and to the need to develop them as project managers, to ensure that the following requirements are taken care of:
- The need to motivate project teams.
 - The need to develop project staff, particularly in non-technical areas.
 - The need to understand and discuss the career aspirations of project staff, and to consider possibilities for their future at the point of exit, in association with any relevant central support services.
 - The need to manage all aspects of a team's performance including clear and varied role definitions, induction, regular feedback meetings and annual appraisal.
 - The need to communicate to the entire organisation the importance of projects, their value in bringing new skills and as an important tool for career development of staff.
- 6.20 LIS heads should consider the scope for the creation of a 'bridging fund', to assist the continuation of employment of essential staff between contracts, where this is seen to

be in the interests of the organisation. This fund could be part of one set up for the whole institution or dedicated to LIS services.

- 6.21 LIS heads and project managers should accept responsibility for informing newly appointed staff, and their managers of their employment rights and obligations of staff and any departmental policies relating to project staff. This will require liaison with the central HR department and any specialist adviser that department may have designated on fixed term staffing matters.
- 6.22 Fixed term contracts typically raise numerous issues concerning equal opportunities, although interestingly these were not raised to any extent in any of our data sources or interviews. However, LIS heads should seek to ensure the equitable treatment of all project staff in relation to terms and conditions of service, as far as this is feasible.
- 6.23 As it is important that projects are well managed, LIS heads should take a keen interest in the appointment, development, appraisal and performance management of project directors. Investment in all aspects of training in project management will need to be encouraged, if it is not provided at the right time by the funder or other agency. Without such interest effective staff appraisal and performance management is unlikely to be provided to all project staff as should be the case. Project managers should also be encouraged to understand the career plans of the staff on their projects and to discuss career choices with staff during the project. They should also be expected to work with staff to develop personal development plans which cover both skills required within the project brief and transferable skills for the longer term.
- 6.24 In paragraph 6.32 we propose that LIS project staff in specialist areas should be identified as a discrete cadre within the existing national careers web sites. However, similar steps are also required at the institutional level, and heads of LIS should use their influence to see the creation of an institutional redeployment register to aid the relocation of staff whose contract is about to end. This would not only help individuals to increase their chances of further employment within the institution, but also save costs of redundancy, and serve to retain existing talent. Project directors should be expected to be proactive in helping project staff near the end of their contract term, if they are not going to be offered permanent employment.

Recommendations for the Funding Bodies

- 6.25 Chapter 5 reported a perception that the funding bodies had a relative lack of interest in human resource aspects of their projects. Their financial monitoring does not extend to monitoring skills or people movements and to some extent the project procedures militate against effective human resource management. However, in practice project directors reported that any regulations were interpreted flexibly and positively by the funders' secretariats.
- 6.26 Under the Concordat the research councils and major charities entered into various obligations concerning the staff they were helping to train. This is because they saw that their funding served two objectives: the support of research and the training of a cadre of new researchers. Although the funders of LIS projects do not have a similar role as regards research, we believe they have broadly similar goals as regards LIS

project staff. If this is agreed, the logical conclusion is that funders should take the human resource development of LIS staff more into account.

- 6.27 While we do not believe that there is an exact parallel between the responsibilities of the research councils and those of funders of LIS projects, the funding bodies for LIS projects are concerned to help institutions in the development of their information services and to prepare them to play a leading role in the hybrid world. Clearly, they have an interest in whether or not the right skills are available to carry out their projects, but it could never be their role to oversee the training or development of project staff or to impose “good practice” requirements. In addition unlike research councils or major charities they are focussing on development not research and their horizon is shorter. They usually expect sustainability and embedding of the innovations they support, as they are financing development of innovative services. In addition many of the developmental skills needed for LIS projects can be found in sectors outside higher education and are not peculiar to that sector.
- 6.28 This conclusion does not affect the funder's wish to see effective human resource policies being applied by institutions; they have a joint interest with institutions in wanting project staff to be content and to work through to the end of their project. The prime responsibility for the application of sound human resource policies therefore rests with the institution and the only question remaining is to what extent the funders should seek to ensure that such sound policies exist. If they were to promote good human resource practices, should they also monitor that these have been applied?
- 6.29 We have made the point above that the research Concordat has been valuable for career research staff, and that there is much in it that could usefully be applied to LIS project staff. This could be done in either of two ways: by the authors of this report producing a summary and inviting discussion of it, or by a representative group reviewing the Concordat as part of a collaborative exercise between relevant parties to try and standardise good practice in employing LIS project staff. We have no doubt that the latter is the best approach to gaining institutional commitment to implementation. It is therefore recommended that the main LIS project funding bodies, along with relevant groups such as CILIP, UCISA and SCONUL, should convene a working group to review the Concordat, and seek to draw up a similar template or guidance document for the LIS sector. We would expect much - but not all - of the content to be similar. Once it is agreed, the funding bodies should encourage institutional adoption.
- 6.30 The funding bodies share with HEIs the wish to see the right skills developed in the area of LIS. They also have a commitment to promoting good human resource practice in the projects they fund. It would therefore not be unreasonable for this commitment to be stated in any documentation surrounding the grant of funds, not as a condition of funding, but as an expectation and as an expression of shared values. Such a statement would help to strengthen the case of any project staff member or director who thought that an institution was not following good practice on any HR issue.
- 6.31 There are two areas in which increased guidance by funders on the financial issues associated with staffing would be beneficial. First, a clearer articulation by funders

(such as JISC) on how to treat staff costs in bid proposals would be useful. This does not imply standardisation of staffing costs, but rather transparency in how such costs should be treated. Second, there is a strong case for the inclusion of 'on-costs' in project budgets to cover staff development, recruitment costs, redundancy payments (where appropriate), and other similar legitimate charges. These are not overheads but rather real project costs.. The bidding templates or proforma prepared by the LIS project funding bodies should specifically invite HEIs to propose budgets for these items in proposals. The notes could also emphasise the importance of sound human resource management and confirm that the funders' secretariats will respond sympathetically to requests for funding virement or amendment arising from human resource issues.

- 6.32 There is much that could be done collaboratively to provide career information between HEIs for LIS project staff nearing the end of their contract term, and indeed for LIS staff more generally. Bodies such as CILIP, SCONUL and UCISA have an obvious role to play in identifying solutions. One relatively simple approach would be to encourage a specialist LIS careers service within the careers advisory services that are now becoming available on the web. Such a service could play a valuable role in keeping the specialist skills developed in LIS projects within the higher education workforce.
- 6.33 Finally, although funding bodies are to some extent bound by Treasury guidelines in the extent to which they can make forward commitments, we believe that there is room for greater flexibility in allowing institutions to make contract appointments for the life of approved projects. This would minimise the uncertainty that afflicts project staff and would have clear benefits in reduced administrative and recruitment costs within institutions.

Summary of Responses to the Questionnaire for Project Directors/Managers

(All responses are in **bold font**)

Introductory Data

Number responding		N=65
Contract Status	- Permanent staff member - Under contract - Not applicable	35 (54%) 19 (29%) 11 (17%)
Length of contract	- 1 year - 2 years - 3 years - Over 3 years - Not applicable	4 (6%) 5 (8%) 4 (6%) 2 (3%) 50 (77%)
Age	- Under 35 - 36-45 - Over 45	10 (16%) 15 (25%) 36 (59%)
Number of other projects being managed at present	- One other - Two others - More than two - Not applicable	10 (15%) 4 (6%) 15 (22%) 36 (56%)
Number of contract research projects directed in the past	- 1-5 - 6-10 - Over 10 - Not applicable	36 (55%) 6 (9%) 5 (8%) 18 (28%)
Do you consider yourself a career project manager?	- Yes - No	7 (10%) 57 (88%)
Do you do any teaching?	- Yes - No	21 (32%) 43 (68%)

The Projects

1 In general, when you recruit project staff do you have?

A lot of choice	0
A reasonable number of applicants	31 (48%)
Few replies	29 (45%)
Not applicable	5 (8%)

2 In the last five years has there been any change in your ability to recruit suitable contract staff?

No change	28 (43%)
It is easier now than before	0
It is harder now than before	27 (42%)
Not applicable	10 (15%)

3 Are there any areas where it is difficult to recruit project staff? (tick all those that apply)

E journals	1
Web content	7
Infrastructure access	4
MLE/VLE	3
Retrospective catalogue conversion	17 (26%)
Clumps	4
Middleware	5
Digitisation	7
Union lists	2
Others [Staff in this category included archivists (4), cataloguers (4), and conservators (3)]	23 (35%)

4 Did the project staff you finally appointed:

Need no training at all, as they were experienced	8 (12%)
Require some training and support	44 (68%)
Require a great deal of support	11 (17%)
Not applicable	2 (3%)

5 On this and previous projects have any project staff left during their contract period?

Yes	42 (65%)	No	22 (34%)
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a) If YES, did their decision relate to:

Pay and conditions	12/42
Career prospects in the unit/department	20/42 (48%)
A good job coming up elsewhere	35/42 (83%)
Personal reasons	26/42 (62%)
Performance	3/42
Other reasons (please identify)	

b) If YES, did they leave:

In the last six months of the project	20 (45%)
At an earlier stage	24 (55%)

c) If it was in the last six months, can you think of any way this could be avoided in future projects?

41% believed nothing could be done to avoid staff leaving. However some felt that proactive planning towards the end of the project might help. Other suggestions included longer term funding for projects, creating a pool of skilled workers in a central agency and the introduction of a golden handcuffs scheme.

6 In general, what are the main causes of any difficulties you face in recruiting and retaining contract staff?

Levels of pay	24 (37%)
Long hours of work	4 (6%)
Absence of a career path	37 (57%)
Job insecurity	44 (68%)
Comparative attractiveness of jobs outside HE	14 (21%)
Contractual terms and conditions	5 (8%)
Perception within the institution of contract work as a second class career	8 (12%)
Other (Some respondents commented on particular shortages of staff in cataloguing, conservation and archives)	

7 Does your department/unit have any special policies to help contract staff?

Funds for their training and staff development	25 (38%)
Salary supplement (on top of funding agency pay) to retain good staff	1 (2%)
Occasional funds to pay salaries in any gaps between projects	15 (23%)
Temporary employment between contracts	6 (9%)
Special training and staff development within the department	13 (20%)
Other (One respondent thought the question was a joke. Several others emphasised that project staff were treated the same as everyone else in the department and that efforts were made to give them a sense of belonging.)	

8 What else could the department/unit do to resolve the problems? What would really help you to retain staff?

<p>32 replies were received and most referred to longer contracts as the main solution with a permanent post at the end. Directors wanted assurance of long-term funding for the entire duration of the projects as well as allowing greater flexibility in the manner such funds are spent.</p> <p>One solution mentioned was to allow any project under-spending to be held to pay salaries of staff during the gaps between projects. In addition the transition stage between projects could be limited, which can be effectively done by each institution.</p> <p>The remainder believed that nothing could be done to resolve the problems. This was caused by the lack of funding or in many cases the lack of support seen by senior staff members.</p>
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9 Have you had any training in the following?

Project management	45 (69%)
Managing people	43 (66%)
Managing contract staff	6 (9%)
Career counselling	1 (2%)
Staff appraisal	43 (66%)

10 Does your institution have any special policies which can benefit the contract staff on your project(s)?

An induction programme for contract staff	28 (43%)
A central support fund for contract staff	2 (3%)
Sponsorships or scholarships	2 (3%)
Special training and development programmes	19 (29%)
Funds to mainstream staff when projects end	4 (6%)
Career planning advice	13 (20%)
Provision for study leave	5 (8%)
Part time employment between contracts	3 (5%)
Flexitime or job share schemes	12 (18%)
Other	

11 What else could the institution do to help, other than those things in question 10?

Many directors felt that their institutions should adopt all the policies in question 10 and be open with staff about accepting EU legislation. One reported that “because JISC does not pay any overheads we are not seen as income-earning and the university’s desire to help us is less as a result”. Another thought that “high level advocacy was needed to improve the status of JISC project work”

Project staff should be integrated into the work of the institution and valued – “we are just disposable entities at the moment”.

12a) Do you know about the UUK/OST Research Careers Initiative or the SHEFC Contract Research Staff Initiative?

Yes	10 (15%)	No	52 (80%)
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12b) Has either had any impact in your institution with changes that helped your contract staff?

Yes	4 (6%)	No	61 (94%)
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13 What can project sponsors such as the RSLP and JISC do to remove any of the problems you face?

65% of project directors provided some suggestions. The most popular solution centred around funding. Suggestions were made to increase the overall funding provided per project, making it more realistic and allowing it to cover all staffing-related costs; this would enable directors to hire suitably skilled staff at satisfactory pay levels. Payment of overheads would make JISC/RSLP projects more attractive to institutions (some of whom now have a veto on JISC bids). Directors also wanted secure funding for the entire duration of the project rather than having to renew the funding agreement on a 6 – 12 month basis.

A set of comments related to the bidding process for such projects. Some bidding procedures are seen as too “hasty and ineffective” and longer lead times would help. Institutions tend to pitch bids low in order to win the contract and this results in lack of funding for required staff and shortage of other resources when the project begins. The funders could make it clear that good people cost money and say that salary levels and the overall costs are not the deciding factor. There is a strong desire to see the bidding

process simplified as well as the reduction of time gaps between projects. Projects could be planned to overlap, allowing project staff to transfer from one project to another without going through the tedious recruitment process. One call was for “joined up planning” between the various funding bodies.

There must be a better connection between the funding process and the bidding. One quote echoes the views of several: “It seems that institutions are unable to act on advertising/appointing until financial guarantees are made: this often means that although projects have officially begun, the crucial project staff will only be in post 3 – 6 months after the start date.”

Other suggestions were to increase the financial flexibility of funding provided and to increase the benefits for staff such as maternity leave and salary increments. Also, longer contracts (with some flexibility as to the end date) would allow individuals to focus their time more on the project rather than looking for future employment as is so often is the case.

14 Are there any features of research work in the LIS profession which make things better or worse for your contract staff than all other kinds of contract research work?

Things which make it better in LIS	One feature mentioned by several was the closeness to LIS service provision, which could allow project staff to move in and out of service work. They need not feel so isolated as academic researchers. The project experience was also thought to make staff very employable, both in the Institution and outside. Sometimes project pay was better than main LIS workers.
Things which make it worse	Absence of overhead payments by the key funders makes it hard to build up R&D teams. General attitude of academic staff to LIS project staff is not one of respect for their work.

15 Do you have any other comments or ideas relating to the study? If so, please outline below or contact us at the email address shown.

We should note all the extra administrative work within finance and HR departments related to employing fixed term staff.
“The whole project funding system has been skewed in favour of the short term fix rather than the long term solution”.
This study “ignores the effects on the project managers and permanent staff within an organisation. Their skills, resources, targets and involvement need to be included...the human element involves contract and permanent staff working together”.
“We are pleased to see the long standing concerns of librarians and archives being addressed, re the problem of time and again losing the expertise of and knowledge of our collections that short term staff have gained; and re the unsettling and insecure life style of people on contract work”.
“The institutional perspective on fixed term contracts leads to lurching and short term development which is not consistent with stated JISC/RSLP objectives”.

Appendix II

Summary of Responses to the Questionnaire for Project Staff

(All responses are in **bold font**)

Introductory Data

Name		N=138
Age	- Under 25 - 25-29 - 30-39 - 40-49 - Over 50	6 (4%) 27 (20%) 62 (45%) 27 (20%) 16 (11%)
Highest academic qualification	- PhD - Masters - Bachelors - Other	12 (8%) 74 (54%) 33 (24%) 19 (14%)
Current pay level	- Under £15000 - £15000-20000 - £20000-25000 - Over £25000	28 (20%) 49 (36%) 49 (36%) 12 (8%)
Full time or part time	- Full time - Part time	118 (85%) 19 (15%)
Member of a superannuation scheme in current post?	- Yes - No	110 (80%) 28 (20%)
Length of time working on current project	- Less than one year - 1 year - 1-2 years - 2-3 years - 3 years and over - Not applicable	36 (26%) 14 (10%) 37 (27%) 26 (19%) 12 (9%) 13 (9%)
Number in project team (including director/manager)	- 1-2 - 3 - 4 - 5 and over - Not applicable	35 (25%) 23 (17%) 18 (13%) 53 (38%) 9 (7%)
Contract status	- Permanent contract - Contract appointment for the project - Contract appointment for research work - Other	14 (10%) 102 (74%) 4 (3%) 18 (13%)
Length of current contract	- 1 year - 2 years - 3 years - 4 years - 5 years and over -Not applicable	52 (37%) 43 (31%) 12 (9%) 4 (3%) 9(7%) 18 (13%)

Your career

1a) Before your current project, how many other contracts/projects have you worked on?

None	1-2	3-4	5 and over
44 (32%)	63 (45%)	18 (13%)	11 (8%)

1b) Where were these? (give one tick for each project)

In the same unit or department	44 (31%)
In the same HE institution	25 (18%)
In another HE institution	38 (27%)
In another organisation outside HE?	18 (13%)

2 How many years have you been employed on contract research projects?

Less than two years	43 (31%)
2-4 years	44 (31%)
5-10 years	36 (26%)
11-15 years	0
Over 15 years	2 (1%)
Not applicable	23 (17%)

3a) In that career have you had gaps between projects with no pay?

Yes 27 (20%)	No 109 (80%)
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3b) If Yes, what happened?

Department/unit paid me	4 (3%)
University paid me	0
I got temporary work elsewhere	10 (7%)
I was unemployed	11 (8%)
Other	2 (1%)

4a) Since you started working in contract research, have you ever applied for any jobs outside HE?

Yes 66 (48%)	No 72 (52%)
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4b) If Yes, was this, because:

No relevant jobs were available in HE	12 (9%)
You wanted better pay	3 (2%)
You wanted job security	22 (16%)
The outside job was a good career move	17 (12%)
Other	16 (12%)

4c) If No, can you say why:

Half of those who said no to this question were willing to explain why. The majority stayed within the HE field for personal reasons as they simply enjoyed the work, preferred HE over other fields and were committed to the projects they were involved in. Some hoped to secure permanent positions after the project and two individuals noted that they had done so. Other comments focussed around the fact that their skills and qualifications

limited them to the HE sector, the pay was better, such work was convenient for securing a part time position elsewhere and some just “had nothing else to do.”

5 What are your career plans?

To move into management level in the Library/information Service	20 (14%)
To continue to develop my specialist skills in HE	32 (23%)
To continue as a contract researcher	8 (6%)
To become a full time academic member of staff	7 (5%)
To research and publish in the project area	5 (4%)
To continue to develop my specialist skills anywhere	34 (25%)
To leave HE once I have acquired transferable specialist skills	23 (16%)
Other: [Responses in this category ranged from those planning academic study to personal factors such as career break, having children, and those having no firm career plan at all]	23 (16%)

Your skills

6 In what area of specialism are your skills?

E-journals	12	MLE/VLE	11	Middleware	8
Web content	55	Retrospective catalogue conversion	56	Digitisation	17
Infrastructure/access	20	Clumps	4	Union lists	7
Collection mapping	16	Information skills	16	Doc delivery	5
Cataloguing	63	Other	39		

7 How might colleagues describe the level of competence you have now achieved in this specialist area (without being modest)?

A novice	5 (4%)
Solid technical grounding, but still have things to learn	35 (25%)
Competent practitioner	66 (48%)
One of institution's best practitioners	21 (15%)
A national expert	7 (5%)

8 Do you know of any other staff in your institution who would be able to take over from you were you to leave?

None known	74 (54%)
1-3 people known	50 (36%)
4 and over	8 (6%)
Not applicable	6 (4%)

The project environment

9 Have you received any support or training from the institution while on the project?

Induction programme	75 (54%)	Project management skills	18 (13%)
Project related technical training	89 (64%)	Financial/cost management	6 (4%)
Research practice	13 (10%)	Writing project proposals	6 (4%)
Presentation skills	26 (19%)		

10 Has your current project manager, or any other supervisor, helped you with the following:

Regular peer reviews and advice on performance	48 (35%)
Advice on training and development	43 (31%)
Annual formal appraisal	48 (35%)
Advice on career planning and future jobs	26 (19%)

11 Do you know what form of central HR support or help you can get at the termination of the project? (Please tick all that you know about):

Training for interviews	17 (12%)	Advice on project vacancies	12 (9%)
Advice on seeking further work and career	21 (15%)	Finding internal part time or temporary jobs	17 (12%)
Study leave scheme	2 (1%)	Don't know	71 (51%)
Exit interview when you leave	11 (8%)		
Other: [Comments varied from those who said they were told there was no help available and would not expect it anyway to one who praised the project director for being creative and supportive in finding new work]			

12 Do you know what your institution's policy is on giving job security to contract researchers?

No	114 (84%)
Yes	22 (16%)
If Yes, I understand it as being:	
- No security whatsoever	7 (5%)
- May be some after 5 years	3 (2%)
- Permanent post after 7 years	1
- Committed to trying to keep contract staff	1
- Limited by financial constraints	1
- Review each case, as it comes due	1

13 When your project ends, what will you do?

Ask my project director for help finding this kind of project to work on	23 (17%)
Ask others in the institution for other project work	19 (14%)
Return to a previous career job within the institution	16 (12%)
Look around for other work in the institution	50 (36%)
Look around for work outside	88 (64%)
Other: [Responses showed the huge range of situations and attitudes from perseverance ("whatever is necessary to keep working", "look for ways to extend the project") to frustration ("keep applying while on projects – no loyalty offered, no loyalty given", "fall into despair and disillusionment with the profession as a whole" and personal circumstances ("return to my home country", self-employment and consultancy)]	

14 How would you sum up the personal advantages and disadvantages of research project work? (90% of respondents gave an answer to this question).

Advantages
The majority of the answers could be placed under one of the five headings below.

- a) The work provided beneficial experience, enhancing their overall skills level and their CV's (50% of those answering)
- b) A large number found the work to be interesting, fulfilling, diverse and challenging, in an academic environment.
- c) They liked being able to concentrate on one project at a time and working in a project environment.
- d) Respondents simply enjoyed this type of work, considering it to be fulfilling and innovative, often at the leading edge.
- e) The opportunity for networking with fellow staff workers, and the opportunity to travel together with flexible working hours.

Other responses noted the chance to develop project management skills to further their careers.

Disadvantages

The most frequently cited disadvantage seen by project staff was the lack of job security. This was evident in almost all of the responses in one manner or another. The second most common concern was the effect this uncertainty has on the individual. Much emphasis was placed on the inability to make personal commitments, such as buying a house, obtaining a suitable mortgage or situating themselves permanently in one geographical area. A constant level of stress was reported due to worry and concern over where the next project would be. Whether there even would be another project was another concern.

Working conditions were thought to be poor with some complaints focussing around the fact there were no staff appraisals done throughout the course of the project. This resulted in a lack of motivation and continual pressure; the feeling that they were never part of the LIS team and that their work was isolated also ranked high among the disadvantages.

Pay levels were often seen as poor. One individual commented " when you leave a project and join another project, the salary drops to the bottom of the scale again. This is very de-motivating and makes me want to leave the library profession, as I get no recognition for my excellent technical and interpersonal skills."

Professionally, some thought the jobs to be very repetitive and offering little variety; some had taken on boring jobs or dropping their standards to pay their bills, rather than because the project interested or challenged them. This was thought likely to damage the overall success of some projects as well as limiting the staff's skills development. In addition, some felt barred from obtaining any training due to their non-permanent status.

One individual commented that, when applying for a permanent position at an institution as a cataloguer, the application was "turned down in favour of someone with lesser qualifications and skills, because I had spent too long working on short term projects."

Ideas for Action

15 In your experience what can HE institutions do to improve the staffing position on these kind of projects? (Almost 80% replied to this question):

The majority of suggestions focussed on increasing job security, (either through permanent positions or through longer term contracts) and increasing the quality of working conditions and benefits for contract workers. Additional training and the broadening of skills on top of a better level of pay were further proposals.

Suggestions to ensure that staff remained for the entire duration of the contract included:

- a) Introduce “Golden Handcuff” schemes (paying part of the salary only if staff remain for the full duration of the project).
- b) Offer more attractive packages with better pay levels, flexible hours, specific training, pension options.
- c) Provide advice and support in finding work after the project ended, either within the same institution or externally.
- d) Increase the methods and frequency of communication between institutions and project staff with regard to both professional and personal matters.

Other suggestions on retaining staff were to place a responsibility on the institution to become more pro-active in their bidding for particular projects, rather than waiting for projects to end before searching for another. This would enable them to retain the highly skilled and experienced staff they have acquired.

Another proposal was to hire specialised staff with specific skills so that the institution would then be able to attract projects because of them - a reverse of the current process. It was noted that this was risky, but no more of a risk than losing key individuals. Also put forward was the creation of a pool of qualified researchers from which institutions would be able to select specific skills for specific projects. Such a group would enable institutions to place staff in new projects faster and reduce lengthy unemployment for them.

16 What can your department or unit do to alleviate any of the disadvantages described above?

78% responded to this question with answers along the lines of “very little” or “they did not know of anything their institution could do to alleviate any of the disadvantages mentioned.” Among the reasons cited for for this were the restrictions caused by central human resource regulations and the fact that the funding for such projects was external to the institution and subject to bidding and uncertainty.

Positive suggestions included:

- a) Better planning and pro-active efforts by the institution to locate sufficient funding and/or additional long-term projects.
- b) More forethought on how projects will be implemented *before* they begin and specifically the IT implications.
- c) Provide more support for researchers trying to bring in money.
- d) Creating a pool of project/research staff.
- e) Greater investment in staff development so that staff are more flexible and able to adapt to new opportunities.

17 Do you think that the funders of projects can do anything to remedy the disadvantages? (73% of the participants answered this question)

18% stated they believed the funders could do little to remedy the known disadvantages. Most suggestions related to the length of the contract and available funding. They included longer bidding periods, longer contracts for staff, fixed funding for the length of the entire project (as opposed to a yearly review) and more flexibility in the use of funds. Most important was the need to allow sufficient time for staff to complete the project, releasing some of the pressures on them and allowing some flexibility towards their work schedules.

Security of funding was proposed for two reasons; firstly it allowed the staff to go about their work without worrying whether the funding would be provided for another year, and secondly, it would release the directors from their constant search for future funding,

freeing them to supervise and oversee the project. “A lot more thinking should have been done at the planning stage both by the funders’ and by the institutions.”

18 Do you have any changes to suggest to: terms of appointment of research project staff; your conditions of service (working hours etc); policies on gender issues (eg: child support); staff responsibilities of the project director; staff development and training provided; central HR department support. Please explain what they are: (This question only had a 49% response rate)

The most common proposals related to supervised training during their contracts and the desire to obtain access to such benefits as flexible working hours, job sharing, maternity leave and pay bonuses. The most requested support was advice on future employment possibilities. Since these benefits were available to permanent staff, project staff felt they were also entitled to them. Also, proper appraisals/team meetings should be conducted by the project directors. It was suggested that “regular team meetings to discuss progress and share experiences of problems and possible solutions are essential, and should be built in to the project.”

Some individuals commented that job descriptions were too narrow and should be more flexible to “allow project staff to develop as wide a range of skills as possible.” In general, individuals were happy with their terms of appointment. Some thought that more involvement from project managers would help to ensure that projects were not unfinished, when/if event project staff leave for another position before the project is complete.

19 Do you have any concerns we have not touched on? If so, please explain.

There were few responses to this final question as all thought that earlier questions had covered all the issues. Among the few additional points were: “The number of contracts I have had is far greater than the number of projects I have worked on and this is an important issue”, “the idea to have a pool of staff employed permanently by one organisation who could then send them out to individual projects seems a good one.”

One lengthy quotation sums up very well the two sides of this complex issue: “I have ten year’s experience in fixed term contract work, which has suited me very well. Lack of rising income is occasionally noticed, but high income has never been a motivating factor. I am able to do intelligent, innovative work among intelligent people – and that’s a great thing. If contract work became as ‘safe’, bureaucratised and controlled as much permanent work is now, it would lose much of its interest and excitement”

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Other Sources

The AUT fixed term non contract research staff committee provides access to the relevant legislation from the DTI and has web pages at www.aut.org.uk/who/crsfns/fns.html

HESDA Contract Research Staff web pages: <http://www.hesda.org.uk/nation/crs.html>

AUT casualisation campaign pages with information on fixed term contracts:
www.aut.org.uk/campaigns/casu-main.html

Explanation of the Acronyms

CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CCM	Collaborative Collection Management (RSLP)
CROS	Contract Research On-line Survey
CRS	Contract Research Staff
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DNER	Distributed National Electronic Resource
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FDTL	Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning
GMP	Good Management Practice (a HEFCE programme)
HERA	Higher Education Role Analysis
HESDA	Higher Education Staff Development Agency
HIMSS	Hybrid Information Management Skills for Senior Staff
JCALT	JISC Committee for Awareness, Liaison and Training
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
JTAP	JISC Technology Applications Programme
LIS	Library and Information Service
NFF	Non Formula Funding
NSF	National Science Foundation (USA)
OST	Office of Science and Technology
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
RCHSS	Research Collections in the Humanities and Social Sciences (RSLP)
RCI	Research Contract Initiative
RSLP	Research Support Libraries Programme
SCONUL	Society of College, National and University Libraries
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
TQEF	Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund
UCISA	University and Colleges Information Systems Association
UUK	UniversitiesUK (formerly CVCP).