



# Alternatives to Conspectus: Report and Recommendations to SCURL

Overview of Activity, Conclusions,  
Recommendations

Final Report of the SCONE RSLP Project  
Annexe A.1

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Annexe A as a whole covers work on the SCONE deliverables covering:

- Investigation of models for collection measurement in order to permit effective cross-checks and a mechanism for continuous assessment of research data. This is intended to investigate models for objective assessment
- Evaluation of SCURL's approach to collaborative collection management with a view to identifying mechanisms for improving its effectiveness.

However, it is work that also has significant implications for collection level work in the UK generally, and for the CAIRNS idea that dynamic 'clumping' or landscaping based on assessments of collection strength provide the key to intelligent navigation not only within a Scottish distributed information system, but also in large distributed systems generally. The significance of some aspects of developments in the HILT initiative – originally a SCONE 'spin-off' project – are also considered in the same context.

Originally intended as a single stream of activity, work under these headings was carried out in the event in three distinct phases, covered by Annexes A.2, A.3, and A.4:

**A.2:** March 2001 Report on: *An Evaluation of the Current Approach to Collaborative Collection Management in SCURL Libraries and Alternatives to Conspectus: Report and Recommendations on Collection Strength Measurement Methodologies for Use in SCURL Libraries* [C. Ekmekcioglu, D. Nicholson]

**A.3:** CURL Study of the OCLC/Lacey iCAS Software: External Evaluators Report [D. Nicholson]

**A.4:** Sketch for an automated approach to 'scoping ahead' in Digital Scotland and the DNER based on distributed 'collection strength' indices [D. Nicholson]

Taken together, these three phases led to the recommendations specified in sections 6 – 8 of the main SCONE Final Report. In summary, these are as follows:

**(Section 7)** SCONE's analysis of the possibilities of distributed collections strength indices built dynamically by local catalogue systems on good, specially designed, inter-compatible metadata designed for the purpose suggests there may be value in funding research into the possibility of utilising such indices to allow users to 'scope ahead' in the DNER, Digital Scotland, NOF, and elsewhere - an automated, and more reliable, variation on the CAIRNS dynamic clumping mechanism (see Annexe A.4 to this report).

**(Sections 6 and 8) On alternatives to Conspectus, SCONE's recommendations to SCURL** are **(1)** to utilise informed, functionally constrained, professional judgement in the short term, and **(2)** to move to automated methods in the longer term as improvements in metadata quality and compatibility make this feasible. SCAMP to begin to mediate these processes as it develops during the COPAC/clumps project. **On managing collaborative collecting**, it recommends **(3)** continuing the current voluntary approach but taking a more co-ordinated and pro-active role in monitoring collaborative collecting activities. In addition, it recommends **(4)** that SCURL should work with CURL and other interested parties (RSLP, RSLG, JISC, RESOURCE, SLIC, WHELP, M25, RIDING and others) to implement an initiative that would be regionally based but co-ordinated at a UK-wide level and would aim to build a consensus on a UK-wide collections mapping policy, informed by appropriate (specified) research.