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**More than the sum of its parts – a University for Cumbria**

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*"Mergers are not an occasion; they are a process…"*

*N. J. Muller, (2006) p.198*

**Abstract**

Arising from the influential report by Sir Martin Harris in 2005, the University of Cumbria was created on 1st August 2007. It was formed from an amalgamation of St Martin's College, Cumbria Institute of the Arts and the Cumbrian campuses of the University of Central Lancashire.  The vision and mission of the new University is to widen access to higher education in Cumbria where traditionally there is low aspiration, socio economic disadvantage and lack of opportunity. This paper reflects on the process of merger from the perspective of one service department – Learning and Information Services (LIS) and discusses in brief the various integration projects and the impact on staff during the many changes. It benchmarks lessons learned against a similar library case study (of which there are few in the literature) and poses questions about the role of culture in such processes. Finally the paper reflects on the institution wide response required in bringing about successful management of change through its leaders and concludes that effective communication and development of staff are essential ingredients in shaping the future of the University.

**INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT**

Following the amalgamation of St Martin's College, (SMC) Cumbria Institute of the Arts, (CIA) and the Cumbrian campuses of University of Central Lancashire, (UCLan), a new University for Cumbria came into being on August 1st 2007. The institution has been through a major transformation, following the gaining of Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and the publication of Sir Martin Harris' Report in Sept 2005, (Harris, 2005) proposing the creation of the University of Cumbria. In parallel, the region's lifelong learning network has been set up (Cumbria Higher Learning)

http://www.cumbriahigherlearning.ac.uk/ to help raise aspiration in the region and to facilitate progression routes into higher education notably via the four Further Education Colleges in Cumbria and in partnership with several Universities including the University of Cumbria. The University has just celebrated its first year and it seems timely to reflect on the changes that have taken place, their nature and scale, and to capture the impact of the amalgamation on the development of Learning and Information Services (LIS), specifically on LIS staff and its services to students including lessons learned.

On 1st August 2007, three very different cultures were brought together, from three diverse institutions, each with their distinctive focus. Many writers in the literature on mergers point to the importance of addressing organisational culture, (Barchan, 2006, Locke, 2007, Appelbaum, 2000). Also expressed in post-evaluation studies of organisational amalgamations in higher education and elsewhere is the challenge of implementation (Swanepoel, 2005). It is true to say that the first year of operation has been demanding, not least because the systems (technical and adaptive) are still in the process of being understood and harmonised, and the institution's new identity is youthfully emergent.

During this period of transition LIS staff are under pressure from two distinct dimensions: they are a key component in helping the student and staff population to adapt to their new learning environment whilst also having to internalise the many changes themselves and in some cases learn new working practices. However at the time of writing on 1st August 2008 the university feels a very different organisation from its predecessors and is becoming well positioned to "realise its vision to open doors and transform lives through education, …enterprise and community ambitions." (University Strategic Plan, 2007-12). LIS staff (and those across the organisation) have achieved a tremendous amount in supporting the academic mission of the new

institution. The multi-site nature of the University adds a level of complexity and the status of the various campuses is also evolving.

This article takes a reflective view of the amalgamation from a particular perspective; it sets out how one service department Learning and Information Services (LIS) successfully integrated the libraries and associated services of the legacy institutions: Cumbria Institute of the Arts Library, Carlisle, St Martin's College libraries, Lancaster, Ambleside and Fusehill St, Carlisle and Learning Gateway, Carlisle and UCLan Libraries, at Newton Rigg, Penrith and Milbourne Street, Carlisle in readiness for the University's inception on 1st August 2007.

There is research evidence to suggest that the strategic intent of the merged institutions is central to the decision to go ahead with the merger or amalgamation and that the synergies achieved can be described as the "2+2 = 5" effect; (Cartwright and Cooper, 1993, Hovers, 1971 quoted in Appelbaum, 2000, p.649); this leads to fundamental questions about the very nature of the university and what it is seeking to achieve.

**The big question…what kind of university are we?**

The mission of the new University states explicitly that it will promote an environment of inclusivity and accessibility recognising that its prime academic function will be to serve a diverse student population, including many more part time, self employed, and mature students than currently. Thus new learning and teaching methods will be required to meet the requirements of employers such as e-learning. Factors such as the dispersal of the communities we serve, the poor economic profile of Cumbria, and its problematical geography and communications make the challenge all the greater and as such the University will have a major distributed presence – unlike

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any other. To give some idea of the challenge ahead the following excerpt from the Cumbria Higher Learning Business Plan states:

*"The cultural identity in Cumbria is one of limited participation in higher education, low aspiration and reliance on traditional employers. The average young participation rate in higher education in Cumbria is 28%. This is slightly lower than the national average but this masks a wide variation between different areas in Cumbria. At ward level there are 31wards showing participation rates of less than 16% and 63 wards have participation rates of below 24%."*
http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:c48cM_8JJ70J:www.cumbriahigherlearning.ac.uk/files/Executive%2520Summary.pdf+participation+rates+in+Cumbria+higher+education&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=uk

Thus it will not be sufficient to only have a traditional campus based model of education. Hence it is important to understand the future shape of the institution required in order to meet the current and future infrastructure and student needs.

Ramsden confirms the view that Universities will become less bureaucratic and more enterprising than previously, driven by the massification of higher education. A 'one size fits all' approach is not sustainable…"each university can no longer be considered to be providing the same experience for its students as every other university" (Ramsden, 1998, p.32). The University of Cumbria understands this agenda well and has seized the opportunity to re-invent itself, with the support of its stakeholders, notably the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA), the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA)

The formation of the University is therefore not based on any current blueprint, such is its novelty. Part of the amalgamation process has been to reform and reshape the new institution, to develop its new identity, in parallel to the change process. This has been an integrative part of the organisation's development, led from the top but involving all staff in the amalgamating institutions and has been an essential ingredient of communicating the change and involving the entire academic community. (See Communication). The context for the change is a vital element to be understood, to engage staff in a common purpose maximising the likelihood of success and managing the many risks that surround mergers as highlighted by HEFCE. (HEFCE, 2004)

The University currently has some 17,000 students, over half of them part-time and nearly 1000 of them, further education students. The University's headquarters are in Carlisle. The University first admitted students in 2007-8 and is developing a suite of foundation degrees that meet the needs of employers. Learning and Information Services is a converged service department offering library, IT User Support, Media Services and Learning Technology development. It now has 125 staff working across the five locations and has service level agreements with third party providers in London, Barrow and Whitehaven.

The formation of the University is therefore described against this backdrop of a complex higher education landscape, with a focus on processes, people and place in order to envision and create a very different higher education institution, one which could serve the needs of disparate communities in Cumbria and elsewhere and take its place in the sector as a University for the 21st century.

**PROCESS**

Institutionally the route to a single institution was well defined which enabled each department (academic and support) to work within a framework. It was clear from the outset what the objective was – a functioning University on the 1st August 2007.

In reality the elements surrounding the amalgamation were not separate or discrete but iterative and inter-dependent. Such was the complexity the Vice Chancellor designate made it clear that there would be minimum change for staff on the 1st August 2007, and Heads of Department were tasked with implementation of this mandate. Helping staff and students to understand the changes, the revised processes and likely impact was an interwoven theme requiring the co-operation of many functions such as the Human Resources department, the Student Union and the recognised Trade Unions.

Strategic and operational priorities were re-directed to achieve the aim of a single new institution, and strategic leads assigned at Executive and Operational level. Institutionally, due diligence work was managed centrally with departmental heads completing templates for requests for information to the University Secretary. The HEFCE model was closely followed:

"A comprehensive implementation plan will include a timetable for merger with lead responsibility clearly defined, a risk analysis, contingency plans and an outline of project management arrangements." (HEFCE, 2004, p.9) and a Shadow Board comprising senior staff from CIA and SMC was formed to lead the merger plans.

St Martin's College was the legal vehicle for the amalgamation, having gained TDAP and subsequently University title, and the management of the legal and organisational process was led by SMC. A shadow Academic Board was set up with full representation from the amalgamating institutions. This was crucial in the

decision making processes and in establishing some ownership of the changes. However, Hart confirms that "the big issue is always who is seen to be the dominant partner…" (Hart, 2005, p.81) and St Martin's worked hard to mitigate any risk that staff in the smaller amalgamating institutions would see it as a takeover. LIS mirrored this approach by enlarging its Management Team to include senior staff of ex-SMC, ex-CIA and the UCLan Cumbrian campuses. In addition, a Library-led liaison group consisting of the Heads and Deputies of both SMC and UCLan met regularly to review communications and progress and make mutually supportive decisions.

**Year 0 – Planning**

Year 0 was academic year 2006-7, and planning began in earnest in the summer of 2006 with an audit of LIS functions and service points across the amalgamating institutions, carried out by the Librarian at the CIA. This revealed a mixed picture of policy, service models, opening times and staff roles. It was a vital piece of work that enabled the service to identify which areas needed to be addressed and the similarities and differences that would add value to the new institution.

As might be expected, there were differences in terms of scale and services offered. Collection sequences, circulation rules and charges, web services, nomenclature and staff titles, staff structures all needed examination to find the best fit for the new University. For example the CIA Library was not a converged library and IT operation, whereas the UCLan and SMC libraries were. Media Services were a feature of SMC but not in CIA or UClan being outside the remit of the equivalent service in those institutions. The minimum change principle referred to above would keep the status quo in this respect and in reality having the different service model has not been a problem, proving that students "don't know or care where the curriculum ends and the support information resource begins." (McKnight, 2002, p.4)

As part of the scoping exercise many more similarities than differences emerged – importantly a strong customer focus, and emphasis on information skills teaching as a strategy to engage students in their learning. The level of pro-activity across the various locations varied however as each was a product of its campus culture and staffing levels were not comparable. Fortunately all three organisations used the Talis Library Management System and had a single classification system (Dewey). Talis was made a key integration project to ensure continuity of service post August and to be a focus for unification of procedure that each library would identify with.

**Amalgamation Projects**

LIS created a UOC Integration Project Plan in October 2006. This set out:

- Project definition and Vice Chancellor (designate) statement of intent

- Planning Assumptions

- Stakeholders – internal and external

- Project Objectives and dependencies

- Information required to implement the plan

- Project Plan implementation process

- Project workpackages (Action Areas and Task Groups), leads and audit references

- Timescales

- Project Manager responsibilities and team roles

- Partners

- Project Reporting, monitoring and evaluation

- Costs

LIS identified 23 potential integration projects and developed a top level view of the new service profile and resulting implications. A staff workshop for LIS and ICT Services staff (our partner in IT delivery), reviewed the list of projects and the available timeline and as a result 12 of the 23 projects were taken forward.  (see Appendix 1). Upgrade of the video conferencing infrastructure to deliver additional networked services across the new University was deferred until Year 2, 2008-9.

A core principle adopted by LIS was to maintain continuity of service to all and to conserve student and staff entitlements. Our aim was to adopt the most preferential position for the maximum number of users, so that they received an even better service than previously –taking the best from each service area and harmonising entitlements upwards wherever possible. The diversity of the three institutions was a helpful catalyst in bringing together the new department. Muller points to the challenge of maintaining current services whilst also planning for the post amalgamation. (Muller, 2006). Our senior managers, who were also project leaders felt this keenly, however the impetus to create a new institution was a positive force.

**Project Management**

At the University level, each Faculty and Service, made regular submissions to the Shadow Strategic Delivery Panel, (made up of Senior Executives from CIA and SMC) that oversaw the entire process and allocated tactical and financial resources and additional support. Discussions with UCLan were undertaken separately as the amalgamation process was more complex and of a different order with only 2 campuses (not the entire institution) transferring to the new University .

Strategic planning was very much centred on the new institution and its Year 1 implementation, and as such some of the plans LIS had in train as St Martin's were put on hold. The university Risk register was updated to reflect the amalgamation

projects and LIS developed a contingency plan to mitigate identified risks, for example network failure. This was presented as part of the project management infrastructure. Reports focussed on actions to attain a functioning operation on 1st August 2007, any resources required above and beyond current budgets and progress of project objectives. A system of reporting in LIS using elements of Prince2 Project Management methods was set up. These were monitored and signed off by the LIS Management Team (LISMT).

### *ICT issues log*

At institutional level there were a great number of ICT projects identified as all the major systems were potentially integration projects, for example the Talis Amalgamation Project, Cumbria smart card project, combining 3 student registration databases, Active Directory etc : each one had a Business owner and a work package owner. Four categories of actual or potential problems were identified in the log that LIS reported against:

- Requests for change
- Questions
- Statements of concern
- Specification

These were distilled into an ICT issues log to capture all the LIS ICT requirements and dependencies arising from the work. A senior LIS manager/ Deputy Head of LIS was responsible for the reporting on these issues and liaising with ICTS. LIS Project Managers reported into the log to update progress and identify any new issues. Items had a status of 'open' or 'closed' to aid monitoring.

### *Checkpoint Reports*

These were produced monthly that in effect created a timeline and critical path for each of the work packages. Each project lead presented a checkpoint report to LISMT on the 13 LIS projects. They identified actions taken, progress made and any new issues requiring attention. These reports allowed dependencies to be dealt with and ensured that milestones were met. A Gannt Chart was formulated and kept up to date using information from these reports. Importantly the various reports and resulting discussion helped managers to have an informed overview of the overall process and tasks, and to facilitate communication to their teams as well as to inform the next steps of their own projects.

*Highlight Reports*

Highlight Reports focussed on the significant, high risk areas arising from the Checkpoint Reports that needed to be more closely monitored by LIS senior management. Often these needed the action and decision of departments outside LIS and required the Head of LIS to drive them forward. An example would be the LIS web site that was re-launched and re-branded implementing a new content management system led by the Marketing and Communication department.

Policy decisions arising from these Reports were made by the combined LIS management before onward submission to the relevant University Committee for example the Shadow Academic Board. The outcome was a harmonised set of University of Cumbria LIS Rules and Regulations, Student Suggestions Policy, LIS Code of Conduct, fines and charges, Collection Management Policy, Publication Schedule for compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The LIS reporting structure allowed for debate and expression of different management perspectives. The project groups themselves consisted of staff at various levels from each amalgamating institution bringing a diverse perspective to

the proposals. LISMT purposefully delegated the responsibility to the projects and their leads to decide on the best approach and did not overturn the decisions of the working groups. The creation of a 'strengthened steering core' (Clarke, 1998 quoted in Locke, 2007) via the extended management team was reflected in the institutional structure and was needed to cope with the pace of the change.

**Due diligence and resource allocation**

In parallel the institution was conducting the legal due diligence process to ensure the transition to a new University was fully compliant with statutory requirements. LIS had to supply information on existing contractual obligations that needed to take account of the new institution size and status, such as,

- Copyright Licensing, Educational Recording Licensing, Newspaper Licensing, book supply contracts and electronic resources supply,
- photocopying contracts, TV licences
- membership of external bodies such as SCONUL, and details of agreements for third party services for example the NHS and the Tower Hamlets Professional Development Centre.

A budget setting process for Year 0 and Year 1 was set up and LIS presented proposals for an enhanced collection of learning resources that would assure the continued access of transferring students in terms of subject breadth and curriculum fit. Identification of specialist software was also considered with ICTS and with academics, and a new student desktop image agreed with staff from each institution. An advantage has been that UOC now has a much wider range of subject disciplines than did the former CIA and SMC, and the combined increased investment in e-resources has been advantageous to all students and a very positive message to pass on to students and staff.

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) were asked to validate the compliance of UOC licences for e-resources post merger with positive confirmation. In many instances this technical work went smoothly, however the changes required to create a new Athens identity for University students ands staff were held up somewhat.  We were informed that all the former SMC and CIA Athens details had transferred onto a new uoc prefix. When checked, they had actually been merged with the Courtauld Institute for Arts in London and not CIA in Carlisle! It was swiftly rectified with no negative consequences. The message here is to expect the unexpected. Passwords did not transfer and nor did UCLan Athens accounts since UCLan themselves would naturally retain their own prefix for their existing clients. LIS Helpdesk staff were kept busy creating accounts manually during the transition for those students studying over the summer, before returning to fully automated procedures in the Autumn.

**PEOPLE**

As Hart says the biggest challenge in mergers/amalgamations is handling the employment and industrial relations aspects. (Hart, 2005). Whilst she is writing from a legal perspective and describes the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) process, she also stresses the sensitive nature of these. During the UOC formation, staff were reassured that there would be no job losses as a result of the amalgamation which helped allay staff concerns. However it must also be acknowledged that this was a time of uncertainty for staff and time and effort was expended on face to face meetings, briefings, and staff development work. We take from this that the human side of organisational culture is not to be overlooked.

Locke's study of the amalgamation of two specialist colleges of higher education and their attempts to integrate their cultures indeed indicates that "management styles

and initiatives need to be mindful of the existing cultures and sub cultures…" (Locke, 2007,p.83) and goes on to say that human and cultural factors assume strategic importance of a scale and nature over and above that which might be expected. So reflecting on the UOC context, perhaps the management and staff focus was centred on the projects (task) rather than on the "soft" side of the amalgamation, although many initiatives were conducted with people in mind. (see below). Staff appraisals recently examined indicate that the full implication of the change went far beyond the merger of the three Talis systems, and this is only now being recognised. Add the multi-site context to the mix and the challenge becomes even greater as Skodvin observes…"the geographical fragmentation of the new institution may require additional resources and expertise to – literally – keep the organisation together, ensuring coherence and the integration of staff and students." (Skodvin, 1999, quoted in Locke, 2007).

At institutional level this was certainly recognised and good work was done to engage staff in the process of change and also to challenge basic assumptions using the Heads Conference forum. The Heads Conferences are senior management events where strategy and vision is debated and actions agreed. During 2006-7 and post merger, 2007-8 Heads and their staff from the legacy institutions have had the opportunity to:

- Agree a vision and mission for the new institution and create the University Strategic Plan 2007-12
- Agree a choice of name so as not to damage brand recognition (a concern of both institutions)
- Work to avoid the perception of a takeover

(above adapted from Locke, 2007, p.85)

- Debate the Learning and Teaching Strategy and the distributed learning model

- Discover the creative industry potential of the new Faculty of the Arts (former CIA) for the University and understand more fully the Faculty of Science (former UCLan) contribution to curriculum and the county

- Position the institution for success by creation of institutional leadership standards

- Take part in a Shakesperian mythodrama to develop our leadership skills providing "great stories and insights into human nature…" (Olivier and Verity, 2008, p.139)

Applying Locke's checklist to LIS then, we have similarly worked hard as a management team to enthuse and build trust across our teams and have created a Vision and Action Plan for the first 18 months of the new University. Staff engagement sessions were also run at each of the campuses and involved updates on the process, management of change and dealing with feelings, practical questions on HR matters of concern to staff, and broader awareness workshops on the mission of the University for Cumbria with guest speakers from a range of internal and external departments. It was felt important to focus attention on the "big picture" as well as on the more individual micro level to keep staff informed and on board with the motives for the amalgamation. A key part was helping staff to identify with the new University and understand the "brand" and LIS' role within it.

**Culture and Communication**

Cultural expression in organisations is a complex phenomenon. The literature supports the view that a rich array of symbols, artefacts and ritual accompany human perceptions of work evoking diverse emotional responses and altered notions of

identity.  Harmon comments on the importance of the socio-cultural dimension of mergers saying that it is unrealistic to think that a single unified culture can emerge quickly from radical amalgamations and alliances. She offers the view that it can in fact be helpful to have a level of divergence in the new organisation:

"A common misconception is that there must be total assimilation of different cultures; many different models and levels are possible and retaining some elements of the old cultures is desirable." (Harmon, 2002, p.110).

Further she highlights the role of leadership in creating images of the organisation that elicit new loyalties. (Harmon, 2002, p.97).  We would agree that communicating the direction and mission of the new organisation and the potential contribution of staff roles and functions is central to the implementation plan.

At the University, the shadow executive approved a communication plan that involved all the amalgamating institutions and a U4C web site was set up to relay news about the institution to the region and the sector. Negotiations with UCLan had started at a later stage than with SMC and CIA and therefore engagement with their staff was on an informal basis.  Nontheless a comprehensive cycle of e-zines and print newsletters was sent out from March 2007 covering the amalgamation process, HR developments and LIS changes to service.  Project leaders were encouraged to put details of their projects into the newsletter which was circulated monthly. In this way LIS was able to feed in regular news about its projects and how they would affect students and staff, and keep students at each campus up to date. Additionally, LIS and ICTS jointly produced a Staff and a Student Newsletter about the ongoing changes to the Library and IT service; different versions were written specifically for each campus location based on users' most common queries. Changes to email, file storage and password information were the top concerns. Within LIS the internal

weekly newsletter, was used to convey information, give snapshots of the emerging university and provide answers to FAQs generated by staff.

As might be expected, new terminology caused some discussion – for example, what will the campuses be called and what's the difference between a campus and a site with the underlying issue perhaps being concerns about new relationships between the different components. The decision to have the administrative centre of the University in Carlisle for example was also a big change conceptually for some staff, but less so for others. It was hard for managers to anticipate how individuals might respond to the many changes that unfolded because change is such a personal journey and managers are themselves adapting to change. Muller's study of a library merger in South Africa concurs that:

"For most people change hurts…When people experience a high level of uncertainty their response is to move to protect themselves. Consequently coping behaviours tend to be self oriented and dysfunctional as far as the organisational good is concerned. Studies agree that usually during this time management finds it hard to predict how employees will respond." (Muller, 2006, p.200).

**PLACE**

Post inception, the University is reviewing its academic portfolio, re-structuring certain departments such as Student Administration and some Faculties where operations cannot function, as well as on much a smaller scale, minor realignment of staff roles where there is a business need.  In parallel, the University's change in status, scale and outlook means that the presence and location of the institution needs careful assessment. With the help of stakeholders and funders, a new Estates Strategy has been launched which implements the combined academic delivery plan and recasts former planning assumptions made about the physical infrastructure

from the former legacy institutions. External capital funding over the next 7-10 years will have an enormous impact on the shape of the University.

FE and HE Libraries play a significant role in providing access to learning and by virtue of their geographical spread in Cumbria and nationally they are strategically important. Already courses are being commissioned in new subject areas and using emergent technologies. LIS is involved in the application of ICT and expertise to ensure that learning resources are embedded into course design and pedagogically sound support is offered. Plans for a learning space at Lillyhall, Workington are underway in partnership with Energus, and a typology for the kinds of campuses the University will have in the future is being developed.

LIS is fully embedded in the region via its membership of Addlib – a cross-sector library collaboration consisting of Further, Higher, NHS, Schools, Social Care, and Public Libraries in Cumbria. Addlib has begun to form a strategic plan that will unite further the various "places" and "spaces" where students can learn and be supported.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Swanepoel offers a useful checklist of lessons learned as a result of library mergers in Flanders colleges of higher education. (Swanpoel, 2005, p.91-92). Of the ten put forward by this author, three are relevant to the University of Cumbria situation:

**Lesson 1: "Library mergers at institutions of higher education should not be underestimated in terms of complexity and the volume of work involved."**
All staff would agree that maintaining current services whilst managing and implementing integration projects was demanding. The degree of motivation for creating the University was a significant factor in determining staff capacity and relish for the increased workload; the expectation was great, however underpinned by

institution-wide communication and involvement, it is to the credit of the staff that so much was achieved and students were unaffected by the transition.  In terms of projects, the ICT elements of integration were the most complex such as the Talis Amalgamation Project where LIS worked with Talis to bring together three systems, also the introduction of the new student smart card called for a high level of systems integration. The meetings and communications with staff however were probably the most time consuming and indeed critical elements; with hindsight more time spent on this aspect would have been beneficial.

**Lesson 2:  "Even in circumstances where the organisational cultures of merging libraries differ only marginally, it may still necessitate deliberate actions to manage those differences."**

On the surface the cultures of the amalgamating institutions libraries appeared similar and their professional outlook fairly uniform, although in practice the same kinds of roles had different pay gradings, job descriptions and line management accountabilities. It would perhaps have been advisable to undertake a "cultural audit" to identify expectations, managerial and working styles prior to inception as suggested by Locke. (Locke, 2007).  At a local level in October 2007, the LIS senior management had a development day to examine such aspects of working together including agreeing leadership behaviours - perhaps some earlier intervention might have been useful prior to amalgamation. On the other hand LIS was conscious of needing to fit in with the institutional level negotiations and politics.

Did we spend long enough as a management team on helping people to come to terms with the changes? The answer is probably not, despite our best efforts – we had limited time to achieve all the necessary outcomes. However the comprehensive support package available for staff went beyond the resources of a single department and was addressed well at institutional level via the strategies put into place as

described earlier and by clarity of goal. University staff were therefore very motivated to succeed and proved themselves to be highly effective, harmonious teams, working diligently across functional units. The job security fears alluded to by Simpson, (Simpson, 2005) were not a significant feature of this case study, however the assurances given by the senior executive needed to be repeated throughout the process.

**Lesson 3: "…Library mergers [can] lead to wide-ranging positive outcomes, including benefits to the library, the institution and the wider community; however …such positive outcomes could come with a price, for instance an increase in the complexity and volume of work, a loss of independence and an even more complex organisational structure."**

Without doubt the enlarged institution is more complex, and the LIS structure being multi-campus has elements of matrix working within it unfamiliar to the smaller joining libraries. The benefits for the smaller campus libraries however are that the infrastructure is stronger, there is a wider pool of expertise and staff development opportunities and learning resources have been improved because of better funding. However some staff also feel a loss in autonomy, despite efforts of line managers, as for them there is more bureaucracy than previously.  LIS managers will continue to offer support and career enhancement wherever possible and assist staff to make the transition. The addition of further education delivery to the University requires a specific service response that LIS wishes to understand more fully in 2008-9. Finally we agree with Swanpoel who says there is no uniform way of merging libraries of higher education. (Swanepoel, 2005)

**CONCLUSIONS**

In a complex change situation such as a merger or amalgamation it is not possible or desirable to separate the change process experienced by individual staff,  their

departments,  and students from the institutional context – an institutional response is therefore needed. At the University of Cumbria the change was managed well; the University won the Universities Personnel Association (UPA) Higher HR (Human Resources) Award for Organisation Development, sponsored by marketing agency Euro RSCG Riley. The award was for the 'Shaping our University' project, which incorporated a range of initiatives to support the University's launch.

Learning and Information Services were fully embedded into the organisation's strategy for creating the new University of Cumbria and the resultant changes to service operations are an enhancement –definitely more than the sum of its constituent parts. The leadership qualities required by staff at all levels cannot be underestimated and LIS has taken every opportunity to develop its senior team culminating in a revised mission and reassessment of delivery to 21st century students in a distributed FE/HE context. Lessons learned have been many and integrating the cultural elements post merger remains the biggest challenge. However one year on the service is positioned well to meet the expansive learning support agenda of the enlarged institution which is bound to bring even more enrichment to our roles. Our many partners (internal and external) will be important collaborators in this new venture.

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**Appendix 1.  University of Cumbria: Learning and Information Services Amalgamation Projects**

1.      **Harmonisation of policies** and procedures including user loan entitlements and charges, rules and regulations and student and LIS code of conduct

2.      The **Talis Amalgamation Project** (TAP) to bring together the single LMS system into a unified format and integrate data, history, catalogue and user interface

3.      **Learning Resources** – procurement and delivery of additional e-resources to support the new subjects in the University including the issue of new Athens accounts.

4.      **Front of house services** – implementation of new processes and procedures to ensure a common service delivery model from day 1

5.      **LIS Web site** – updating content and implementing a new University Content Management System - Contensis

6.      **Publicity and guides** – new content and new house style following University branding regulations issued by the Marketing, Recruitment and Communication department

7.      **Student induction** – planning an institutional wide approach to induction including delivery of a new digital production about the whole range of University Services

8.      **Smart card project** and registration. All students and staff received a new Cumbria Card with printing and photocopying functionality and on some campuses meal plans; it was crucial to liaise with the student records project outside LIS to ensure business processes aligned

9.      **IT user support**, virtual helpdesk and deployment of the new University desktop; supporting the rollout of a new email system and connectivity to the many locations

10.     **Communication** – regular newsletters and FAQs online – for students and with staff. Three versions of the IT newsletter were required to assist users at their "home" institution, as the situation was different for each

11.     **Delivery of a training programme** and knowledge base information so that staff can assist students in the university

12.     **Revised administrative procedures** for Finance, Operations, Administration and core systems – production of help and advice on the interim web site called U4C