

**Bodleian Social Science Library: Committee on Library Provision and Strategy
11.30am, Friday 28 November 2025**

Social Science Library Large Discussion Room

MINUTES

1. Introductions and apologies

Academic members: Ariell Ahearn (SoGE, Chair), Alan Beggs (Economics), Dirk Witteveen (DSPI).

Student members: Cerys Acton (Geography UG), Mary Anne Ludwig (Sociology PG), Nihar Gokhale (ODID PG), Shuaichu Pan (Politics UG), Shuwei Sun (Geography PG).

Library members: Aimee Burlakova (St. Antony's College Library), Elizabeth Wells (Social Sciences Libraries), Jo Gardner (Social Science Library, Minutes), Louise Clarke (Head of Social Sciences Libraries).

Apologies received: Baltazar Dydensborg (Politics and IR), David Doyle (Politics and IR), Emma Bowie (Criminology), Great Nnamani (Economics), John Southall (Social Sciences Libraries), Julius Schneider (Socio-Legal Studies), Muhammad Atcha (Socio-Legal Studies), Sophia Andresen (Social Policy and Intervention).

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Committee noted a clarification to Item 5, and the minutes were updated and finalised. Jo Gardner confirmed that a footrest is now available for library readers to borrow.

3. Manor Road Building / SSL Refurbishment Project update

Louise introduced the Manor Road Building (MRB) refurbishment project, and noted that its primary objective is to improve the building users' experience in terms of functionality, comfort, navigation and general satisfaction of the space. The top priorities are a comfortable temperature throughout the building, throughout the year, and a refurbished café with a new caterer and break-out spaces. A third set of priorities includes the library, office acoustics and improved wayfinding. The project must finish by September 2026, with library works in the long vacation.

Four priorities for the library were agreed in our Hilary Term 2025 meeting: A warm and welcoming aesthetic; optimise natural daylight; increase provision of collaborative spaces for small groups; and improve noise management with clear zoning of quiet study areas.

Louise presented indicative design ideas for a warm and welcoming entrance area, the creation of two new small discussion rooms and study booths in the SSL entry spine.

Shuaichu Pan commented that the new small discussion rooms would be very helpful. Cerys Acton noted that square or rectangular tables would be most suitable to use with laptops. Nihar Gokhale noted that a wall-mounted screen would be useful. Dirk Witteveen commented that soundproofing is very important.

Nihar and others commented that the study booths might encourage people to talk and disturb others. Nihar suggested replacing these with 'soundproof' pods, Ariell Ahern and Cerys suggested individual chairs and desks or tables.

4. Social Science Library Report

4.1 Extended lending update

Jo Gardner clarified that Bodleian Offsite items published during and after 2000 are now available for borrowing, unless they fall into excluded categories. In line with this, SSL staff have completed a project to change the status of SSL 'Library Use Only' books to loanable. This also applies to items published during and after 2000.

Aimee Burlakova passed on positive feedback about the SSL project, particularly the conversion of books to loanable on request.

4.2 Bodleian Libraries Information Literacy Framework

Jo reported that the Bodleian Libraries piloted the JISC [Joint Information Systems Committee] Digital Capabilities information literacy framework for subject-specific search skills training during 2024/25. Three Social Sciences Subject Librarians took part: Eleanor Peers for Russian and East European Studies, Sarah Rhodes for African Studies and Helen Worrell for Archaeology and Anthropology. All three received positive feedback and will continue to provide their search skills training using this framework.

4.3 Subject support highlights

The Committee received the subject support report for this meeting. Jo outlined some particular highlights. Sarah Rhodes is co-teaching the termly 'Unlocking Critical Thinking for Undergraduates' iSkills workshops this year, and Elizabeth Wells and Jo updated the annual Criminology 'Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism' session to accommodate the use of generative AI programmes. John Southall is developing the Libraries' Text and Data Mining service and online guide. A new iSkills workshop for this is planned for early 2026. New subscriptions include Policy Commons, an invaluable resource for policy documents which are otherwise very difficult to access. Elizabeth received positive feedback from Law Library colleagues about the new subscription to EndsReport.

5. Bodleian Libraries reports

5.1 Open Research update

The committee received the Bodleian Libraries' Open Research update for this meeting.

Louise noted that the national negotiations for new Read and Publish deals with the 'Big 5' journal publishers are important for research and teaching, and the consultation will close in December. Ariell asked when we would lose access to these journals if there was a national decision to end the contract. Louise responded that our contracts end 31 December 2025, but there would be a grace period, post-cancellation access to many back-files, and contingency plans are in place.

Louise advised that new open access requirements for REF 2029 will come into force on 1 January 2026. Updated guidance is available at <https://openaccess.ox.ac.uk/ref>. Louise also drew attention to SHOx as a new development for hosting University of Oxford journals.

6. Comments from student representatives

Nihar passed on a request for the Manor Road Building café to remain open at weekends. Louise warned that this may not be possible due to the lower footfall in the building at weekends. Jo will pass the request on to the building's catering committee nevertheless.
ACTION Jo

Mary Anne Ludwig passed on a request for more information about how to access electronic Legal Deposit content. Jo noted that there is an online guide at <https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/eld-explained> and will follow up with John Southall as Subject Librarian for Sociology. *ACTION Jo*

In response to a request for clarification from Cerys, Jo confirmed that all discussion rooms in the SSL are bookable for all readers.

Shuaichu passed on a request to improve the ventilation in the study carrels and a request to upload the PPE degree course reading lists to ORLO. Louise confirmed that improvements to ventilation are a priority for the building refurbishment project. Ariell advised Shuaichu to liaise with the Department of Politics and International Relations about adding the degree course reading lists to ORLO, as this decision rests with them.

Shuwei Sun commented that Geography postgraduates enjoy studying together at the SSL, and would like further information on which spaces are most suitable for discussion. Jo responded that both of the existing Discussion Rooms are most suitable, and quiet discussion is fine in the Quiet Study Room at the back of the library.

Jo passed on some written feedback from Emma Bowie. This included positive feedback about the Scan and Deliver services and the availability of essential readings. Some students mentioned that they find the library quite cold, and it would be helpful to have more monitors available. Jo confirmed that improvements to heating are a priority for the building refurbishment project, and will investigate funding for more monitors. *ACTION Jo*.

Jo passed on some further written feedback from Great Nnamani. The building refurbishment project should address the comments about the library feeling cold and the lack of natural light. The committee considered the request to change the limit for booking library discussion rooms, with the general consensus that the current limit was too generous. Jo will pass this feedback on to Bodleian Libraries colleagues. The current limit of ten hours per week per person applies to all Group Study Rooms in the Bodleian Libraries' LibCal system. The request for better-quality markers for the library whiteboards was also noted. *ACTION Jo*

7. Comments from staff representatives

Dirk Witteveen commented that he and his colleagues are working on the next REF assessment, and he noted the new open access requirements.

8. Items for the Divisional CLiPS

None.

9. Any other business and date of next meeting

Louise extended her gratitude to Ariell as outgoing chair, and wished her well for the future. The next meeting will be on Friday 20 February, 2-3pm.