

**SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF
PHASE 3 OF THE ELIB
INITIATIVE: FINAL REPORT
SUMMARY**



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1 INTRODUCTION

This document is a summary of the Final Report of the ESYS Summative Evaluation of Phase 3 of the eLib Programme, undertaken for JISC JCEI under Contract SC/JISC/605. It summarises the main achievements of the Programme and presents the findings and recommendations from the evaluation.

ESYS plc is a consultancy company which brings experience of undertaking and evaluating technology applications programmes in a number of fields, particularly space and defence. This evaluation therefore takes an independent view of the programme from outside the HE library sector. ESYS also conducted the Summative Evaluation of eLib Phases 1 and 2.

The eLib Programme consisted of three phases. Phases 1 and 2 together formed a successful £15M programme over a period of 3 years from 1994 to 1997. eLib Phase 3 was a £4.1M, three year programme which sought to consolidate this work in a practical context and to extend Phase 1 and 2 benefits by helping to achieve 'critical mass' in key areas. The transition from Phases 1 and 2 and the makeup of Phase 3 are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

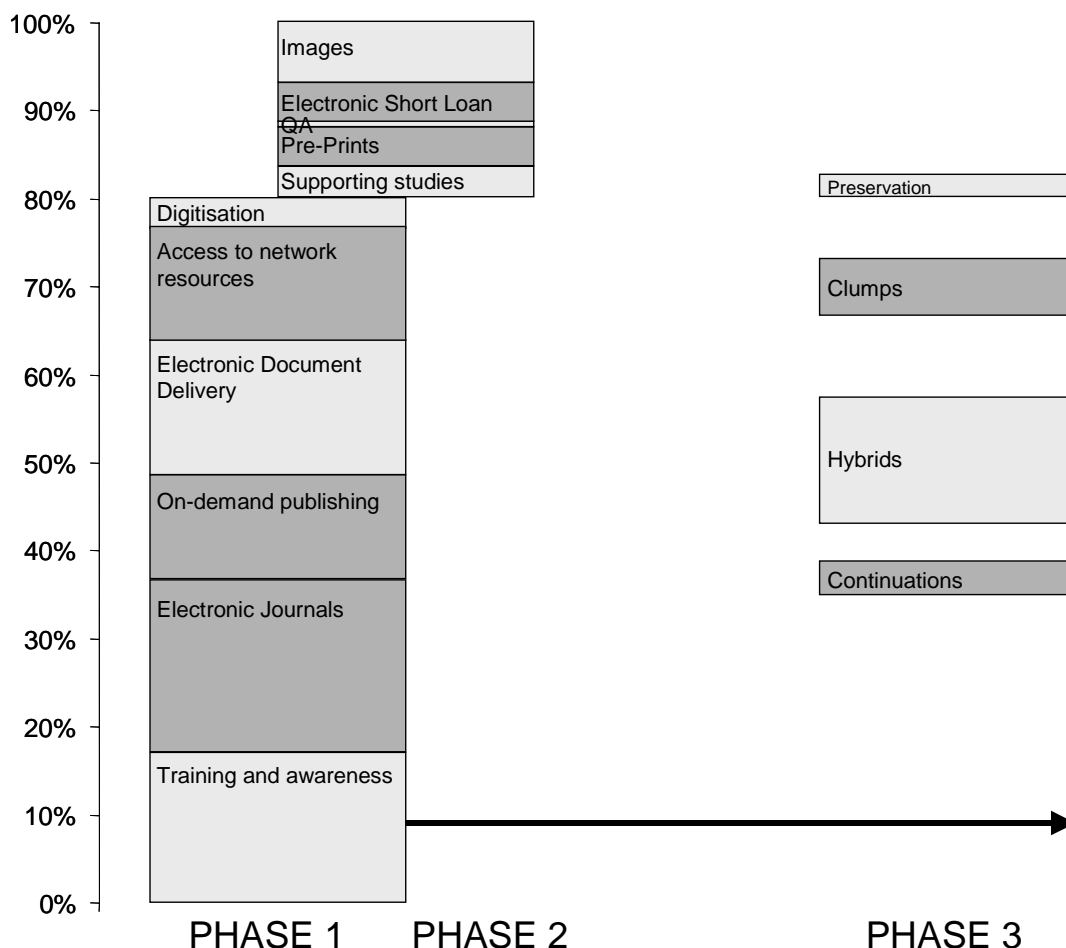


Figure 1: Transition from eLib Phases 1 and 2 to eLib Phase 3.
(Scales are proportional to the budget for Phases 1 and 2)

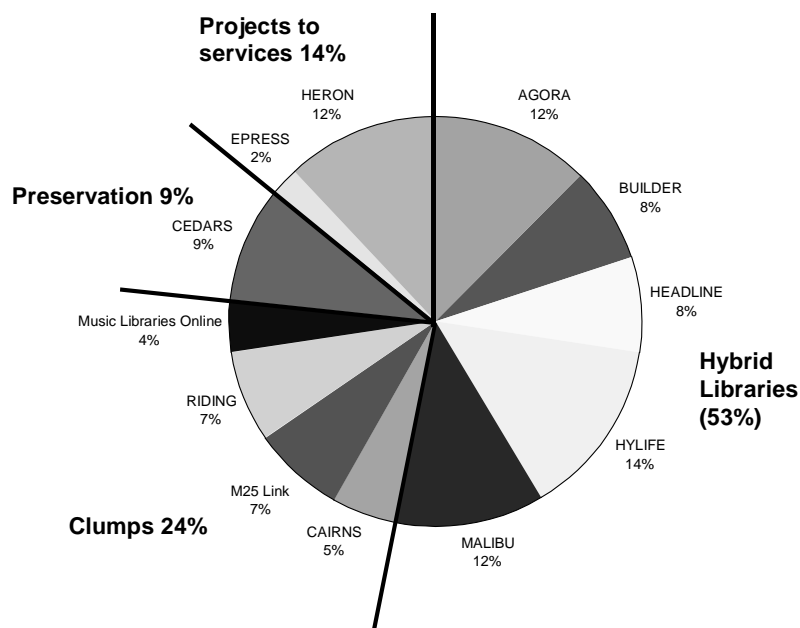


Figure 2: Programme areas and projects within eLib Phase 3, shown with % of the total budget

The programme context for eLib Phase 3 is summarised in Figure 3.

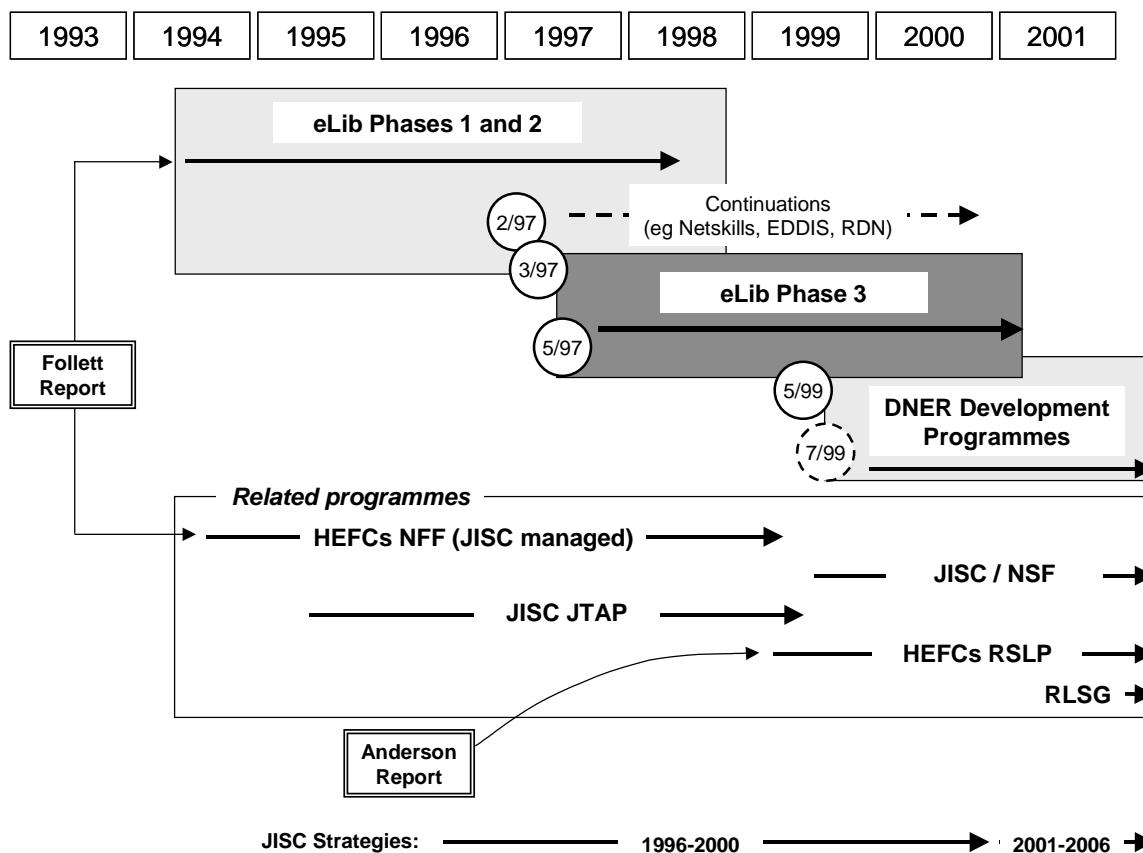


Figure 3: Programme context for eLib Phase 3

2 ACHIEVEMENTS

The achievements of the different areas of the Programme are summarised in the following table, which also shows the total budget allocated to each area.

Programme area	Total budget	Achievements
Hybrid libraries	£2,188,147	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed significantly to knowledge of how hybrid libraries work in practice and their impact on various communities Working models established by all 5 projects with positive evaluation. Wide range of content and functionality covered Enough diversity to allow the community to compare and contrast approaches Clear evidence of institutional embedding Some functionality built into commercial products Influence on the design of the DNER Forward links to MLE activities
Large scale resource discovery (Clumps)	£977,863	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four working Clumps established Made valuable progress on technical Z39.50 issues Important work on organisational aspects such as collection level descriptions and access policies Directly developed library cooperation Evidence of effective exit strategies in that 2 major Clumps which represent a substantial fraction of UK HE have continued their work with self funding
Digital Preservation	£370,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackled an important and difficult area of work Made recommendations in the areas addressed Provided a framework in the key area of cost models Provided HE input to the broader debate on legal deposit of electronic materials High profile project with a high level of external interest
Project continuations	£586,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains the development of the On-demand publishing work Many HE copyright clearances are now coming via HERON HERON is addressing one of the critical issues in library provision - improving access to recommended study materials EPRESS has succeeded in developing a framework for the production of electronic journals

3 FINDINGS

The findings of the evaluation are expressed in relation to four key questions posed for the Programme by the evaluation team. These questions address the validity of the programme in a JISC context, the approach adopted, the effectiveness with which the programme was conducted and its impacts on stakeholders.

Did the Programme supply sufficient added value to justify the allocation of JISC resources - did eLib Phase 3 provide benefits which would not have happened otherwise ?

1. eLib Phase 3 was a successful programme which has met most of its objectives and has had significant impacts for a programme of its size.
2. The allocation of JISC resources has been justified because eLib Phase 3 has applied emerging technologies to key operational issues in the HE library sector and thereby provided models and lessons which will inform future development. These findings have benefited the whole community through the extensive dissemination and evaluation procedures applied.
3. The emphasis in Phase 3 was more practical and service oriented than the earlier Phases and as a result the outcomes are of a more technical and detailed nature. These outcomes, despite a lower profile, are no less important or influential and would not have happened in this coherent form without the Programme.
4. Most of the Phase 3 outputs are in the form of pilot systems and greater understanding, in line with the programme objectives. Some projects did however start with implicit objectives to produce operational systems which were not realised within the project lifetimes.
5. Looking back to the original Follett objectives, there is still limited evidence of cost savings emerging from the work of eLib. Much of the work emphasised increased functionality, although some of the activities should lead to greater direct user empowerment which may produce overall efficiency gains. Phase 3 work in the area of electronic journal production, though small in scale, did produce measurable cost savings.

Did the adoption of a national, managed programme provide benefits compared to a more fragmented distribution of the funds to HEIs to pursue their own ends - was the right approach adopted ?

6. There were clear benefits in taking a coordinated approach to each of the main areas of eLib Phase 3. The benefits arise from the structured range of different approaches covered by the different projects. Emphases in hybrid library projects ranged from technical to organisational while Clumps covered both regional and subject based approaches. This provided a more comprehensive and informative output than a fragmented approach.
7. eLib Phase 3 extended the number of HEIs involved in the programme, building on the already large number involved through Phases 1 and 2. The Clumps projects accounted for a large proportion of the new players involved.
8. The projects have all been very active in both user consultation and dissemination to ensure that the results are shared with the wider community.
9. Some of the eLib Phase 3 projects have become self sustaining with funding provided by the institutions themselves.

Given the structure which was adopted for eLib, was the Programme conducted effectively within this framework ?

10. The management of the Programme remained efficient and effective. High levels of project cooperation were also a positive development. Changes in the staffing of the Programme Office towards the end of Phase 3 may have been difficult to avoid but did cause a loss of continuity and a reduction in the time available for project support. These problems did not ultimately compromise the quality of the Programme.
11. A positive feature of the formative evaluation work was that it helped projects to embrace high levels of user consultation. There remains a very tight time window for evaluation of working prototypes between the availability of a trial version of a system and the specification of the final deliverables.
12. The relationships between a number of projects and their commercial partners have been difficult at times during the course of the work. Despite this, a satisfactory conclusion has been reached in most, though not all such cases.
13. The model of using a commercial supplier as a means to distribute the outcomes of the projects to a wider user base has been explored in Phase 3 with mixed results. It is ironic that most of the successes of the resulting product have been outside the UK HE sector. There is a suggestion that the UK HE sector is not yet a suitable market for more complex products because of the dominance of BLDSC ILL service, the non homogeneity of UK HE libraries and the lower profiles of library consortia in the UK.

What has the impact been on the different stakeholder communities ?

14. eLib Phase 3 has had an important impact on HE libraries by accelerating the uptake of new technologies in a practical, user service oriented way. It has broadened horizons by exploring a range of approaches. By supporting the continuation of work in on-demand publishing and e-journal production, Phase 3 has also impacted broader communities.
15. The hybrid libraries have established working models, addressing both the technical and institutional issues associated with the increased provision of electronic services by HE libraries. A wide range of approaches have been explored to allow organisations to tailor the findings to their own needs. Developments have been both conceptual, such as information landscapes, and practical such as authentication and personalisation. The hybrid libraries have also provided valuable input to the broader Managed Learning Environments which are now emerging. There has been considerable interest in this work from organisations outside the HE sector.
16. Some of the eLib Phase 3 projects have become self sustaining with funding provided by the host institutions themselves. The Clumps projects have been prominent in this, having built on pre-existing consortium arrangements. It is clear that the management in these organisations find the emerging services useful and are willing to support them as a result. The fact that these projects include a substantial proportion of UK HEIs is also important.
17. The work undertaken on digital preservation is important and has succeeded in raising the profile of the issue from an HE perspective at a high level. The project met its objectives in most areas. The issues of costs were handled at a conceptual level. More work is needed on costs and access.
18. Many institutions would like to develop their infrastructure and services further, to take account of the eLib findings and models, but are unable to fund these developments while maintaining an acceptable level of operational service.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Branding issues

- R.1 The value of the eLib 'brand' was established by Phases 1 and 2 and confirmed by eLib Phase 3. It is recommended that **the importance of such branding issues should be reviewed for future programmes** to ensure that the benefits of a 'flagship' are retained.

Programme management

- R2a It is recommended that the **responsibilities and authorities of the different parties involved in project management should be clearly stated in future programmes**. In particular, the relative authorities of the project boards and the Programme Office should be clear.
- R2b Newcomers to JISC projects tended to take longer to start their projects because they were unaware of the 'tricks of the trade' normally used to speed up initiation. **It is recommended for future calls that support should be provided to 'novices' to ensure that project start up can be as swift as possible.**

Commercial supplier involvement

- R.3a It is recommended that **JISC review the status and likely development of the UK market for potential products which may emerge from its programmes**. This would inform decisions about the nature and level of involvement of commercial systems suppliers. The review should attempt to identify the level of product complexity and pricing that the UK market can support.
- R.3b It is recommended that JISC seek to **encourage more than one supplier to become involved in programmes of this type** to ensure competition and prevent single points of failure. This may require a step back from the cutting edge in some cases.
- R.3c It is recommended that **JISC and commercial suppliers agree a clear specification** of mutual commitments in projects of this type. This should include a statement of JISC specific requirements for the projects. Clear mechanisms for contract changes should also be specified.
- R.3d It is recommended that **contracts for the involvement of commercial suppliers should be put in place at or near the start of the work**. Decisions made on individual contracts should not be dependent on decisions made on parallel projects.

Consortia

- R.4a The value of 'natural' or pre-existing consortia has been clearly evident in this evaluation. It is recommended that **existing groupings should be sought in future when self sustaining outcomes are sought**.
- R.4b It is recommended that **consortia be encouraged to enlist the support of those likely to carry out project tasks at the proposal and planning stage**. If such people are required to carry out tasks in addition to **their normal operational tasks, these should be costed into the proposal**.

Hybrid libraries

- R.5 Much valuable information has been obtained from these projects. Some feel that they have nevertheless ended in a cul-de-sac. To ensure that this is not the case, **steps should be taken by JISC to ensure that the lessons from these activities are not lost.**

Clumps

- R.6 The Clumps have made good progress towards pragmatic systems which satisfy their users within the current limitations of the Z39.50 protocol. It is recommended that **the efforts towards cooperation and convergence within the regional and subject consortia be pursued**, taking account of the non technical developments of these projects.

Preservation

- R.7 It is noted that work in this area has already been continued. It is recommended that **the on-going work should include issues of cost models and access.**

Institutional and user take-up

- R.8a There have been **interesting findings from the Hybrids and Clumps about the nature of user behaviour** in relation to searching and use of these systems. It is recommended that **these findings should be explored further** because they have important consequences for future programme decisions.
- R.8b This evaluation has identified a number of factors which limit institutional and user take-up. These include slower development of back office systems, a lack of IT staff with the necessary specialist skills and a lack of operational resources. **It is recommended that JISC take full account of such factors when setting future objectives.**
- R.8c Many of the projects have found that authentication was a larger issue than expected. Effective authentication is the key to delivery of personalised services and in some cases represents a barrier to local uptake because of the complexity involved. The DNER has picked up this topic and commercial developments are continuing so **it is recommended that JISC continue to monitor developments in this area** to guide those seeking to implement local systems.

Exit strategies

- R.9a This evaluation has perceived that some projects considered that their exit strategies were not realistic and were formulated because they had to have them in place. This view may be the result of hindsight, but it is nevertheless important for projects to set realistic targets. It is therefore recommended that **JISC provides a lead to projects on its expectations for their individual exit strategies and the means that should be used to achieve them.**
- R.9b Where required by exit strategies, **it is recommended that JISC provide support to projects on appropriate models, protocols and basic licences and support in their implementation.** The basis for funding decisions changes as projects/services get closer to market and JISC may need more explicit structures which reflect the shift in balance from funding to investment.
- R.9c It is recommended that JISC **explore the process through which open, collaborative research and development work should become protected once a commercial prospect is identified.** New service models are needed because existing ones are too commercially focused in some cases.

- R.9d It is recommended that if **it is intended to bring the results of an activity to the market, sufficient resources should be allocated to support effective marketing**. This is particularly important where project outputs are not made freely available and depend on commercial mechanisms to achieve widespread use. It may be appropriate to investigate the benefits to HE of working more closely with the enterprise support networks who are geared up to supporting new companies and new product development.

Reporting

- R.10 It is recommended that the **project reporting should be streamlined where possible and should concentrate on key issues of concern**. The aim is to improve the ability of the small central management team to use the information effectively and to limit the overhead on projects.

Dissemination

- R.11a There are significant opportunities for products and services emerging from eLib to expand their markets beyond HE into FE and the e-university to achieve additional revenue/wider benefits. It is recommended that **current JCEI studies should be scoped to consider the needs of FE for JISC type services**.
- R.11b Individual projects have undertaken extensive dissemination during the course of eLib. In some cases, a more centralised approach to dissemination could have optimised the use of resources. **It is recommended that the balance between central and project level dissemination be reviewed for future programmes**.
- R.11c It is recommended that **a single authoritative summary of eLib should be produced**. This could take the form of a book designed to **summarise the end results, particularly those of practical value to librarians** and should be produced in an approachable 'journalistic' style. The summary should take account of the DNER work to summarise Phase 3 lessons and be disseminated actively. It should be linked to an end of Programme dissemination plan established in cooperation with library groups.
- R.11d eLib has produced an extensive resource base of information which remains of value to the library community. Much of this information is held at project level, which requires outsiders to know about the programme to access it effectively. **It is recommended that JISC investigate the use of knowledge management techniques to broaden access to the information resource**. This would complement the previous recommendation and could form part of a larger JISC information resource.

Programme links

- R.12 There are important links between eLib and its parallel and successor programmes. In some cases these could have been stronger, particularly across committees. It is recommended **that JISC should monitor the ongoing opportunities for programme cooperation**, particularly with the complex linkages needed within the DNER and MLE activities.