## Jean Sykes
# Linking M25 Higher Education Libraries in London

## Keynote Item

# The M25 Consortium

- A bit of M25 background
- Main achievements of the Consortium
- The M25 Link project
- Technical issues to note
- Organisational issues to note
- Challenges still to be faced

M25 Link Project

# A bit of M25 background

- Established in 1993
- 38 Higher Education Institution libraries
- Major research institutions
- Small specialist institutes
- Large teaching and learning institutions
- 250k students and 15m books

# Main achievements of the M25 (1)

- Successful joint staff development programme (8 events per annum)
- Disaster recovery planning guidelines
- The M25 web guide/directory
- The M25 access scheme for users
- M25 Link Project (1998 - 2001)

# Main achievements of the M25 (2)

- First, the M25 Web Guide

- Then, the M25 Access Scheme

- Now, the M25 Link search tool

- In the future, document delivery?

- Expansion to other sectors?

M25 Link Project

# The M25 Link project

- One of four eLib "clumps" projects
- A virtual union catalogue
- Using Z39.50 technology
- Covering 7 library systems
- And the Union List of Serials
- Built on the M25 Web Guide

# Technical issues to note (1)

- Z compliance varies in library systems

- There are only a few brokers to choose from (eg Europagate, VDX)

- Any chosen broker will need customising

- Same standards applied differently in different libraries and systems

**M25** Link Project

# Technical issues to note (2)

- Results will only be as good as original input (ie variable cataloguing standards)
- Results will need sensible merging
- Results will need de-duplicating
- Serials holdings are problematic
- Results not as accurate as with physical union catalogue - does it matter?

# Organisational issues (1)

- Only a few participants will be really committed - start with them

- Keep remaining partners up to date with progress and encourage them to join

- Systems staff may not be as committed as their chief librarians - treat them carefully and try to enthuse them

**M25** Link Project

# Organisational issues (2)

- Some partners will be slower to acquire Z-server capability

- Do not wait till everyone is ready before starting - just get on with it

- Progress is helped if there is a history of co-operation and if participants know each other well

M25 Link Project

# Organisational issues (3)

- Reluctant partners will join as critical mass of partners gets bigger
- Reluctant partners will join when they begin to see the benefits for users
- Focus groups of users can help to evaluate the search tool as it develops
- Link will be launched before completed

# Challenges to be faced (1)

- 50% of Consortium libraries still to be added

- Not all will have Z server capability by the end of the project and the launch of the service

- Serials holdings problems remain to be resolved

# Challenges to be faced (2)

- Collection level descriptions need harmonising with other projects and services

- Interface needs improving following user focus group suggestions

- Web guide needs refinement to complement/integrate with Link tool

**M25** Link Project

# Challenges to be faced (3)

- M25 access policy needs refinement

- Document delivery service should be natural future enhancement

- Discover>Locate>Request>Deliver (DNER)

- Whole new set of challenges will arise including copyright, user authentication

# Some useful web sites

- http://www. +

- M25lib.ac.uk/prototype  (M25 Link tool)

- M25lib.ac.uk/M25/     (web guide)

- M25lib.ac.uk/M25sec/     (Consortium)