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## Linking M25 Higher Education Libraries in London

### Keynote Item

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# The M25 Consortium

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- 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
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# A bit of M25 background

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- Established in 1993
  - 38 Higher Education Institution libraries
  - Major research institutions
  - Small specialist institutes
  - Large teaching and learning institutions
  - 250k students and 15m books
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# Main achievements of the M25 (1)

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- 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)
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# Main achievements of the M25 (2)

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- 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?
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# The M25 Link project

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- 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
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# Technical issues to note (1)

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- 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
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## Technical issues to note (2)

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- 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?
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# Organisational issues (1)

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- 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
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## Organisational issues (2)

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- 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
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## Organisational issues (3)

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- 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
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# Challenges to be faced (1)

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- 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
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## Challenges to be faced (2)

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- 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
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# Challenges to be faced (3)

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- 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
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# Some useful web sites

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- <http://www.> +
  - [M25lib.ac.uk/prototype](http://M25lib.ac.uk/prototype) (M25 Link tool)
  - [M25lib.ac.uk/M25/](http://M25lib.ac.uk/M25/) (web guide)
  - [M25lib.ac.uk/M25sec/](http://M25lib.ac.uk/M25sec/) (Consortium)
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