Summary of the meeting on 10/02/21

The group discussed the role, remit and terms of reference of a revised Learning Content group that would ensure that their work is effective in engaging with and resolving the issues facing the sector around e-textbooks and materials for learning and teaching. SCONUL are developing a few community interest groups including one for blended learning, so liaison between that group and this would be beneficial.

The group are producing a briefing paper for library directors to share with senior colleagues to enable them to understand the issues around content for learning and teaching and e-textbooks. A second briefing paper for academics is also being created. This will help academic staff to become aware of the impact of their reading lists on student experience and accessibility as their decisions are driving the market.

Jisc will be analysing data on the Kortext and BibliU agreements to understand spend across UK institutions and student engagement. This evidence should provide key insights into the types of agreement on offer, their suitability and sustainability.

There was concern raised regarding student experience as institutions are having to choose between a small number of licences for premium expensive content or spend budget on more restrictive content. In some cases this means only securing one book per module. Due to the pandemic, some institutions have reluctantly agreed to license content as the only way to provide their students with access but this is not sustainable past this academic year.

Prices hikes are occurring more frequently and in addition librarians are frustrated that publishers appear to be moving more e-books under e-textbooks licensing models.

The group discussed and suggested several key questions for the sector and institutions to address when considering future licensing strategy for e-textbooks, including:

- what a library will look like in the next decade.
- how committed institutions were to blended learning
- how far up the institutional agenda is the problem of access to content including a possible lack of content
- the role of academic staff in relation to choice of content and costs
- how serious is the sector about the move to open textbooks.