

SCONUL Focus 64 Contents

- 3 **Editorial**
[Steve Rose](#)
- 5 **Customer Service Excellence (CSE) in Library Services, Queen's University Belfast**
[Elizabeth Traynor](#)
- 8 **Customer service excellence at the University of York**
[Jackie Knowles](#)
- 13 **Using 'snap focus groups' to improve user experience for specific groups**
[Gail Graffham](#)
[Ruth Clark](#)
- 15 **Student engagement in the support and information zone (SIZ)**
[Ruth Galloway](#)
- 18 **Digging deeper**
[Dips Patel](#)
[Heather Baines](#)
[Jo Aitkins](#)
[Jodie Hannis](#)
[Neil Donohue](#)
- 22 **Knowing your customer**
[Penny Hicks](#)
- 27 **Stop over-thinking**
[Regina Everitt](#)
- 31 **Embracing the student voice**
[Elizabeth Oddy](#)
- 34 **A fresh start for LIS promotion**
[Jenny Warren](#)
[Kerry Baker](#)
- 41 **Academic staff perceptions and use of reading lists for book ordering**
[Cleo Cameron](#)
[Gillian Siddall](#)
- 45 **UCL Main & Science Libraries**
[Ben Meunier](#)
[Breege Whiten](#)
- 51 **Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students**
[Pat Christie](#)
- 57 **In-depth induction for our international students using a board game**
[Karen Crinnion](#)
- 60 **Building and convening an international advisory board for the library and academic technology in a startup university**
[Raymond Pun](#)
- 63 **Literature searching for research students: meeting the needs of a diverse student population**
[Jenny Coombs](#)
- 65 **Sustainability Library project: BA Spatial Design students and library staff**
[Leo Clarey](#)
- 68 **Gathering user insight on a shoestring**
[Elaine Sykes](#)

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SCONUL Focus 64 Contents

72	Employability project at City University Alex Asman Diane Bell
74	From the library to the workplace Megan Wiley
81	Designing Libraries Liz Waller
85	Guidance for authors
87	Editorial information

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Editorial

Steve Rose

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Welcome to SCONUL *Focus* issue 64. 'The consumer culture' may best sum up the topics addressed in this issue. Using the term consumer to describe users of our services doesn't resonate easily with all. But maybe it is just a question of semantics, as we cannot deny that our users have become much more vocal as consumers of our services. There are a number of drivers. Changes in the business model of funding higher education has shifted the position of students from being passive recipients of services to being active consumers who are very conscious of the fact that they are paying for their education. The importance of the National Student Survey (NSS) in comparing, year by year, student satisfaction with our services and in positioning each of us in league tables as our services are benchmarked cannot be denied. Neither can we ignore the reality of the financial pressures that higher education organisations face. Students may wrongly assume we are awash with money, based on the individual fees being paid, which creates enhanced and sometimes unrealistic expectations. However, the need to demonstrate value and impact has never been greater, so striving to maximise the satisfaction of all of our stakeholders is key to this agenda.

So how do we rise to the challenges?

Some of the articles look at how specific techniques, methodologies and toolkits have been used to gain greater insight into our customers and their requirements. Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a service improvement tool that many higher education libraries and related services are adopting. This issue features two articles describing how the libraries of the University of York and Queen's University Belfast have risen to the challenge of undertaking CSE accreditation, focusing on some of the benefits to have been realised from this approach. The article from SOAS describes how a number of tools have been used to elicit a greater understanding of customer needs. The authors from the University of Chichester show how the use of snap focus groups has helped identify ways in which the user experience for students on the Foundation Degree in Teaching and Learning Support may be improved, and another article from the same institution describes how user surveys have provided insights into the new one-stop shop student support service. The authors from the University of Leicester describe how they have applied change methodologies by working with their institution's Change and Improvement Team. An article looking at the design and application of a strategic market research project at the University of Manchester, which aims to enhance the understanding of customers' expectations and perceptions, is included in this issue. The introduction of relationship marketing at Newcastle University has involved the inclusion of customers in all stages of the development and review of services, as opposed to viewing marketing and promotional activities as being primarily concerned with telling them about the services that the library provides.

Nevertheless, the deployment of effective promotion strategies is an important ingredient of the whole customer experience, given that we often hear that students do not know what is on offer. In that regard, the article from the University of Chester describes the library's recent involvement in the annual freshers' fair.

Some of the articles in this issue focus on specific services and consider how an understanding of user behaviour and needs can help refine them. For example, at the University of Northampton a survey has been conducted to determine how academics use reading lists as resource procurement tools in order to enhance ordering processes, whilst at UCL (University College London) the authors describe how an investigation of user requirements has driven the move towards a new focus on self-service facilities.

An important aspect of an effective consumer-orientated culture is to ensure that all customers are treated equally and can expect a consistently high

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standard of service. The article from the University of the Arts London shows how a review was conducted to work towards offering a consistent academic support service to all students across six constituent colleges, describing the changes and gains that have been made.

In order to understand the needs of our customers, consistency and equality does not always mean that one size fits all. Therefore some articles in the issue focus on particular user groups. Two articles put the spotlight on international students. At Newcastle University the use of a board game to provide in-depth induction for international students is described, whilst the article from New York University Shanghai features the building and convening of an international advisory board for, and including, international students. Research students are the focus of the article from De Montfort University which describes the development of a blended learning approach to literature searching training.

How do we actually involve students in service improvements? As well as the article on relationship marketing from Newcastle University, described above, this issue features an article from the London College of Communication, University of the Arts, where students from BA spatial design course were directly involved in service improvement through a project brief to redesign part of the library's group working area. At Liverpool John Moores University a student diary mapping exercise, and a follow-up study, has been used as one way of gaining student insight to inform the planned development of the new flagship library.

It is important that, as we come to understand the needs of our customers, we think beyond the provision of library services and consider the potential for contributing to wider university strategies and agendas. The authors from City University, London, describe the work of the Library Employability Group, which was established to explore how Library Services can assist students in developing employability skills. The article from Wiley presents the findings of a literature review, commissioned by SCONUL's User Experience and Success Strategy Group, on current practice in the development of employability skills. The review produced a number of key messages for information professionals, which are outlined in the article.

Hopefully, the range of articles included in this issue will offer useful food for thought for others who are seeking to identify and develop best practice in placing our customers and their expectations at the heart of service development and delivery.

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Customer Service Excellence (CSE) in Library Services, Queen's University Belfast



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Introduction

When Queen's won the SCONUL Library Design Award in 2013 it marked the end of our first four years of service delivery in the new McClay Library – effectively, the end of the beginning. During this period, we had developed the service in a number of ways in response to increased levels of usage and feedback from our customers. Seeking external accreditation for the quality of our customer service seemed a logical next step and we were attracted to CSE because of the clear focus on the customer and the fact that a number of other higher education libraries in the UK had gone down the same route. Other standards and awards were considered briefly but were never very serious contenders.

Getting started

In terms of getting started on CSE, our first step was to select our assessment centre, which we did by reviewing the options and inviting a couple of local representatives to speak to library staff. Ultimately, we selected G4S – largely because they offer an online system for collating and storing evidence and justification statements. We felt that this would avoid the need for paper records, help us to monitor our progress and generally be an efficient way to work. Overall, this has proven to be the case despite the inevitable niggles with the system itself and a couple of false starts in terms of adding our evidence in a consistent way.

The next step was to identify how the project would be carried forward, which staff would be involved and what structures we needed to put in place to monitor progress, make decisions, etc. We spoke to colleagues in several other institutions at this point and then tried to marry their advice with local requirements. One piece of good advice we received was the importance of the management team being closely involved in the process, so library managers undertook evidence collection for criterion 2, which is all about the culture of the organisation, and this worked quite well.

We then selected team leaders for each of the other criteria – these staff were assistant librarians from a range of service areas. The team leaders were not press-ganged but nor did we leave it to the vagaries of volunteering! We sought volunteers from library staff generally to work with each of the team leaders, and over twenty came forward to help. These staff were then assigned to one of the four teams, based on their background and skills, in an attempt to get a good mix in each team. In the event, through no fault of the staff members involved, this worked less well than some other aspects of the project, as some of the teams struggled to identify appropriate evidence in the early stages; we found that much of this needed to be done by more senior staff with a good overview of policies and procedures across the library.

In order to manage the project, our management team plus the CSE team leaders constituted the CSE project group and we met regularly throughout the 18-month period between initiation and our assessment visit. While there will be many ways of achieving the same end result, we found it beneficial to meet monthly, set targets and review our approaches together on a regular basis.

Ten months to pre-assessment

Working towards the standard and evidence collection was initially quite daunting in terms of both scale and complexity, and we struggled to make headway in the early stages. However, an early approach was to focus on areas of strength and weakness – 'It's good and it's a gap' – to identify what we had already done that would serve us well and areas where there were gaps / issues to address. We then set about creating the 'building blocks' that would go towards filling these gaps – creating policy documents or putting key procedures in place where these did not exist already. While we did this, we set

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) in Library Services, Queen's University Belfast

actual evidence collection aside. This worked well as we could see the progress we were making and the gap areas diminishing. During the 10-month period leading up to our pre-assessment in summer 2014, we

- produced a 'mission statement' and 'values' document to demonstrate how our service focuses on the needs of the customer;
- produced a comprehensive 'communication strategy' addressing all forms of interaction with our customers;
- formalised our feedback and complaints procedures and made them more accessible;
- carried out a number of surveys;
- created a CSE website to handle feedback from both customers and library staff and as a vehicle for managing the relevant policy documents and making them available to everyone;
- began using some new consultation methods such as 'customer journey mapping' (CJM) which is a way of capturing every aspect of the customer's experience of using our service, including the emotional responses provoked. This helps us to identify weaknesses in the service and take remedial action.
- created an electronic staff handbook to make sure that staff have ready access to all the support and policy documents we have produced;
- arranged customer service training for front-line staff to help them to deal with difficult situations.

Pre-assessment to full assessment (eight months)

By summer 2014, after working towards the standard for 9–10 months, we went forward for pre-assessment in the optimistic belief that we were pretty close to meeting the requirements in most areas. However, the pre-assessment proved to be a rather dispiriting exercise as we realised that we had not really interpreted criterion 4 and criterion 5 correctly. Both rely very heavily on having appropriate standards of service in place as well as robust monitoring and benchmarking systems for each. While we already had standards of service, there were critical areas such as 'satisfaction' where we had no specific standard and had not measured our performance in any scientific way before – relying instead on the NSS and other institutional satisfaction surveys. While we carried out regular consultation exercises, these tended to be closely focused on what we might or might not do to develop a particular service as opposed to satisfaction with the library and whether users found staff friendly, helpful and knowledgeable or not. While we had many examples of ad hoc praise for staff from library users, we did not ask customers regularly about levels of satisfaction and so had no real data to present here.

In the subsequent eight-month period prior to our full assessment in March 2015, we

- produced new standards of service in consultation with our customers, set up procedures to measure our performance against each of these on a regular basis and published the outcomes on our website for the first time;
- carried out a customer satisfaction survey which we plan to repeat annually to monitor ongoing performance.

We also completed evidence gathering. The pre-assessment, while rather disheartening, did crystallise our understanding of the CSE standard and we embarked on the latter stages of evidence gathering with a much clearer picture of what is required.

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Assessment visit & accreditation

By January 2015 we were ready for assessment and our two-day visit was arranged for early March. The first day was devoted to presentation of the evidence and the second to the assessor meeting customers, partners, stakeholders and library staff. We put a lot of effort into setting up a number of meetings and opportunities for the assessor to speak to a range of groups on the second day. While this went very well, we probably made the schedule unduly demanding (for us and the assessor), and a more leisurely opportunity for in-depth discussion with a smaller number of customers and partners would probably have been better for everyone. While by the time the assessment arrived we were very confident about the quality of our evidence, it remains a stressful experience for the staff involved and it was great to have the extent of our success announced to the entire CSE project team at the end of the second day. While we still discuss our one 'partial compliance' with a little mild resentment, overall, we were delighted with the outcome and felt that all the hard work was fully justified.

Next steps

Following our assessment visit, the assessor concluded that we had successfully achieved compliance against 49 (out of 57) criteria, 'compliance plus' against seven criteria and partial compliance against only one criterion. This represents a high level of achievement, and the assessor was particularly impressed with the extent of staff engagement and involvement, with the variety and number of surveys we had conducted and with the quality of our systems in terms of sharing data and avoiding the need for customers to intervene to ensure that the library has relevant information about them (e.g. the fact that they have dyslexia, which enhances their borrowing entitlement).

We now have our CSE certificate proudly on display in every branch library, we have the CSE logo on the library website, in library staff e-mail signatures and on our social media banners and have started to think about next steps. Moving forward towards the first year's rolling programme (a partial assessment based on presenting evidence against one third of the elements in the standard), we have decided to keep most of the same structures in place.

However, the individual criterion teams will not continue to operate; instead, we will rely on the team leaders updating the evidence and on setting up ad hoc working groups involving a wider group of staff as necessary.

Our priorities are to consider working with a standing student engagement group, to further develop our use of CJMs, to consolidate our data-gathering in support of our standards of service and to continue the work of embedding CSE culture with staff across the library.

Customer service excellence at the University of York

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Introduction

This case study will explore the preparatory work completed by the University of York Information Directorate in order to achieve the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation. Discussions will cover how the tool has proved useful as an agent of cultural change and as a driver for continuous service improvement. It includes some reflections on how this piece of work has had an impact on how we engage with our users, and with each other, and discusses lessons learnt along the way.

Background

The University of York Information Directorate gained the Customer Service Excellence accreditation in March 2014.

The Information Directorate comprises library, IT and archives and was converged in January 2011. We have just over 240 staff.

Why CSE?

CSE is a practical, evidence-driven tool that tests in great depth priority areas for customers (delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude). Emphasis is placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction. We started our journey towards CSE in 2011 and the drivers at the time were:

- *to maintain our competitiveness*
Across the higher education library sector in particular, there was evidence of an increase in the number of institutions gaining the CSE accreditation. With the rise in student tuition fees and associated increase in expectations, CSE offered a practical way of demonstrating quality and value for money.
- *to formalise good feedback that we were receiving about our customer service*
Our customer surveys and feedback schemes indicated that we were getting good feedback about our services and were well regarded by our users, but we knew we could do better. By seeking a formal recognition of our high levels of customer service, we could promote our offering more effectively and we could also target areas of weakness that the tool would help us to identify.
- *to move forward our culture*
We had a desire to place customers at the heart of everything we do across the entire department and cement a commitment to constant service improvement. CSE was a framework we could use to stimulate that change.

The start of our journey

As a department we spent a long time discussing and considering the CSE standard before we actually committed to booking in assessment dates. We kept parking the decision about doing the actual assessment itself as the preparatory discussions stimulated lots of internal debate – we asked ourselves whether we should wait till we finished our library refurbishment. Should we seek accreditation across all functions of our department, given that we were newly converged? There was also plenty of self-reflection on whether we were really ready to go for it. This fluctuating confidence about 'the right time' eventually resolved itself and the decision to book our assessment was taken in 2013. The planning then started in earnest and it then took us just short of twelve months to complete our first accreditation.

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Our core team

CSE is a big undertaking and to do it right you need to dedicate resources for it, both to complete the work that you need to do to be ready for assessment, but also to get customer focus and CSE embedded into the way you work. We chose to establish a core CSE planning team of three individuals who were responsible for preparing the department for the assessment; this included a dedicated full-time Project Officer who devoted 100% of their time to driving the initiative forward. The main tasks for the core team fell into two areas:

- responsibility for the logistics of preparing for the assessment, collation of evidence and creation of the documentary submission for the assessor
- responsibility for engaging all staff in the concept of CSE.

The core team put themselves at the heart of the conversation about CSE to help create interest in the process and empower others to get involved, developing our desired culture of users at the centre of everything we do along the way.

CSE Champions

The second critical group we set up to prepare for CSE were our CSE Champions. We chose ten members of staff to be part of this group, using a mix of those who had put themselves forward for this role and strategic nominees in order to ensure that those involved were representative of all three functional areas of the Information Directorate. They came from all levels of the organisation, but there was an emphasis on choosing staff who were able to represent the larger teams within the department.

Our CSE Champions were primarily used as a communication channel, taking messages to and from teams about CSE and charged with getting people talking and thinking about it.

Engaging staff

We used National Customer Service Week in 2013 as a catalyst to launch the final stages of our preparation for the assessment. During the week we sent a daily communication which included top tips for providing excellent customer service, caption competitions, meet the Champions talking heads interviews, as well as the launch of our two new reward schemes – a ‘good ideas’ scheme and ‘nominate a colleague for exceptional customer service’.

Our efforts to engage with staff not only created a buzz around CSE but, more crucially, they also helped start the process of gathering evidence. The next step was to keep track of this and present it in a suitable form for the assessor.

The paperwork

Our CSE submission ended up being an enormous piece of work and ran to over 70 pages. We used Google Docs to create the document as it allowed us to work in a collaborative way. We also tried to be organised, editing and selecting the strongest evidence as we progressed, and keeping a handle on everything we might want to use – simple things like setting up a system that assigned unique evidence reference numbers made a big difference.

Our submission was very thorough (we had so much evidence we had to tell ourselves to stop) and it was a very factual and heavyweight document. It wasn't particularly engaging for our staff and we didn't think many people would want to sit down and read it page by page. To offset this, we decided to introduce case studies to bring some of the evidence to life. These were short snappy articles that highlighted our key pieces of evidence and brought good practice to the fore – they helped tell our story and were circulated to staff to give them a flavour of our evidence and to engage with the assessment contents.

The pre-assessment health check

A few months before our final assessment was due we chose to have a pre-assessment health check. Not everyone bought into our needing one of these; our assessor and our own director both doubted the value of it, but our core team was convinced it was necessary. With hindsight, this was one of the most important dates in our preparation for CSE. In effect, we had to prepare our written submission for the health check, so it drew the line in the sand and focused our efforts ahead of time and away from the pressures of the final on-site visit. It also gave us the opportunity to get a feel for what the final site visit would be like. For example, the mock interviews we ran with our CSE Champions as part of the health check informed our communications to staff about what to expect for the final assessment.

Preparing for the big day

Once our pre-assessment health check was complete, the countdown began to the big day and our planning ramped up another gear. Our leadership team read through our submission page by page to check for quality and to ensure balance across the functional areas in the department. At this stage we were able to have a last push on the weaker areas we had identified and finalise our action plans to address them. For the wider staff, the focus was on yet more communication, including week-by-week messages summing up progress, director briefings on CSE and drop-in sessions for staff who had would take part in the site visit. Finally, we developed a FAQ document to share with staff; we didn't want people to learn a script, but we did need them to have good awareness of key aspects of our activity such as our staff values and our feedback scheme.

The final assessment

Our on-site CSE visit was in March 2014 and took two days. Ninety per cent of the programme was out of our hands and we arranged all that the assessor had requested: tours, interviews with staff, focus groups with users, time for observation, and discussion about processes.

We also chose to add extra time to our final assessment in order to arrange a showcase for our assessor. For this, we selected half a dozen of our strongest case studies that we thought really captured our best practice and asked those involved to give a ten-minute presentation to the assessor in order to bring their story to life. The addition of the showcase was one of the best decisions we made as it demonstrated confidence and widened the number of people we could involve in the assessment itself. Not least it helped us to feel in control of the agenda for a couple of hours!

Success and beyond

The Information Directorate was formally awarded the CSE accreditation in March 2014, and while we began celebrating our success and thanking our staff, we also took the time to reflect, analysing the preparations we'd made in the run-up to the assessment and identifying lessons learnt about the whole process. We asked our staff what they had felt and thought about CSE and explored how it had gone for different groups and individuals.

The positives we found were:

- *Self-analysis*
All the talking and thinking we did in the early days of our preparations meant we knew our weaknesses and had started to think about them before we even had the assessment date in the calendar.
- *Case studies and showcase*
The use of case studies was liked by everyone and the showcase brought

celebrating good practice to the heart of the process, deflecting any criticism that achieving the standard would just be a box-ticking exercise. In fact, we have become so fond of showcasing that we now do it two or three times a year as part of our overall approach to staff development and communication.

- *Getting the date booked*
Once we had dates in the calendar, we knew the scale of our task and became much more focused. We really felt that we generated a buzz with CSE and staff took great pride in showing our best to the assessor – the buildings looked great and our staff were energised and ready to do their bit.
- *Robust planning*
We ran our CSE project like a military campaign – those of us on the core team had become inseparably attached to our clipboards by the time the assessment was taking place. We'd walked the programme, planned contingency, arranged templates and understood the need for all the little extras. This meant we not only provided a structured programme for the assessor but had also arranged access to the secure areas of the building, refreshments on tap, meal vouchers provided, an office base set up with IT and wifi access and a welcome pack of documents laid out on the desk.

The areas for improvement were:

- *Self-analysis*
The talking and thinking that featured as a positive above also cropped up on the negative list. The extensive period spent naval-gazing meant that staff got bored and didn't believe in our commitment to CSE in the early days. We also lost the plot at one stage by over-thinking things, getting bogged down in the criteria and definitions of customers or partners.
- *Communications*
Our staff were critical of our CSE communications, which were too abstract and vague in the early stages of the project. We also over-emphasised that everyone played their part and was expected to do their bit. This resulted in quite a few staff reporting disappointment that they couldn't actually take part in the assessment day. In actual fact, only a handful of our 240 members of staff got to speak to the assessor.

Reflecting on the wider benefits

Since achieving CSE we have also reflected on the wider benefits the process has brought to our department:

CSE helped with skills development among our staff, allowing individuals and teams to explore and acquire new capabilities in the areas of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services.

CSE has brought us together as a converged department. The value of celebration and sharing of good practice was something we had entirely underestimated and we have improved cross-departmental working and engagement as a result.

Achieving CSE has also enabled us to proudly promote our excellent levels of customer services to our users and other stakeholders across the university. In part, we have also been able to link our CSE accreditation to improved results

Customer service excellence at the University of York

in both our internal surveys and the National Student Survey. All the indicators suggest that it has been a good thing to do and that we are changing our culture as a result.

The future

As many institutions will know, CSE is a commitment for life and at the time of writing we have just successfully completed our first annual revalidation assessment. For this first check-up we focused on the areas where we only gained partial compliance, so we've been looking at fairness, our complaints process and service standards and working our way through action plans associated with each area. We moved out of partial compliance for all but one criterion and gained another two compliance pluses.

Although we no longer have a dedicated project officer on the team, we maintained a project approach to CSE and retain a core team to drive the process forward. For us this is proving a very successful way of managing the process.

Further embedding CSE into how we operate is now the task in hand. Indications are that this might involve stopping calling and labelling everything "CSE" and instead, fully cementing our customer focus into the way we work.

Good practice is continuing and we are looking to gather evidence at all junctures. We hope this will make our next full reassessment in 2017 seem less challenging than our initial one. Whether we will be successful remains to be seen!

After a natural dip post-assessment, staff are still energised by the process. The CSE message is very much alive within the department and our underlying approach and attitudes have been changed for the better.

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Using 'snap focus groups' to improve user experience for specific groups



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Improving NSS scores

Subject librarians from the University of Chichester met together at the end of October 2014 to discuss the NSS (National Student Survey) results. One group that scored 'learning resources' slightly lower than the others was the Foundation Degree in Teaching and Learning Support (FDTLS) based at the Bognor Regis campus. We concluded that this might have been because it is a relatively small course with approximately thirty students in each year group, so a low score from a few students would mean lowering the percentage from that whole group. They are only taught on campus once a week because they are typically working in schools as teaching assistants the rest of the week. Many are mature students with no previous contact with higher education and often need extra support when using library resources.

We decided to run a pilot project with some extra input for this group with the aim of improving their library experience and ultimately improving their NSS scores.

This group did not have formal student representatives. FDTLS students often have tight timetables with family/work commitments. We asked the course coordinator if she could choose some students to attend a meeting with the education subject librarians in order to gather feedback and discuss any issues they might have. We promised refreshments and we asked her to choose a time when she thought the students would be available.

Initial meetings

Students were chosen and contacted. We met at the beginning of December 2014 with an agenda to discuss:

- library environment
- remote access
- Moodle (virtual learning environment)
- library web pages
- books and reservations
- new Discovery service
- any other matters arising

We met with each year group separately on the days and times that suited them best so as to focus the discussions on their particular needs.

The discussions were informative, especially regarding our inductions. We hope to use them as a basis for improving our induction of the new FDTLS students in September 2015. They asked if they could have their inductions in 'chunks'; we shall work with the course coordinator to implement this. We also discussed use of e-books, opening hours, reservations and communication with the library service. We produced agendas and minutes and asked the students who attended to discuss these matters with fellow students and keep in touch, with the aim of holding a second meeting in spring 2015.

However, as often happens, some of the students who said they would attend did not turn up, which meant that our sample student groups comprised two first years, one second year and three third years.

Southern Universities network sparks a new idea

Attendance at an event of Southern Universities Network, initiated by Steve Rose (Rose and White, 2013), in December 2014 raised the idea of 'snap focus groups'. Focus group research is appealing because it encourages group interactivity and therefore enriches the contributions that might have been

Using 'snap focus groups' to improve user experience for specific groups

made by individuals (Cousin, 2009). Essentially, a 'snap focus group' involves meeting students at a place where they have already formed natural groups (e.g. the coffee shop) and asking them questions in return for a coffee voucher. The Southern Universities Network offered a prize of £100 Amazon vouchers to the institution that could best demonstrate 'snap focus groups' in action. Enthused by this idea, and motivated by the competition, we wondered how we could apply it to the FDTLS students in order to gather more of their views about the library service.

The difficulty was that we wanted to target this particular group, so it would be tricky to select them from other students in the coffee shop. We discussed the possibility of waiting outside their lecture room after a class and offering them a coffee in exchange for some information, but eventually decided that we could simply email the course coordinator and ask for 15 minutes at the end of a class to hand out some leaflets about services and listen to any comments about issues that they might have.

Snap focus groups

Tutors were receptive and positive about this initiative and told students that a member of the library team would attend their class; this prepared them to think about asking questions or discussing issues. This approach worked well as students approached library staff at the desk prior to the meetings and let them know what they were going to talk about. During the meetings the students discussed access to particular e-journals, opening hours, overdue items, particular core texts, and how to manage their books and accounts when they are only on campus once a week. We were able to answer most of these questions at the meetings and promised a quick response regarding the e-journals they could not access. The students felt able to raise specific concerns that would be relevant only to that FDTLS course.

We hope that by speaking to each year group personally they will now book 1-2-1s with their subject librarian and feel more confident about emailing us or using the general library enquiry email. Emails from FDTLS students will be monitored following these meetings.

An overall positive experience

Not only did we show that we were willing to listen to their concerns and address the issues specific to that group, but we also formed relationships and reminded them about their dedicated subject librarians. It helped to be able to demonstrate electronic access to library services in front of the tutors who were in attendance at these meetings and said that they had learned something new. In response to a query about access to journals from different publishers, we produced a helpsheet that the course coordinator then added to her Moodle modules. This is exactly the sort of proactive relationship that we were hoping to establish and now build on.

Although this 'snap focus group' deviated from the pattern set by Southern Universities Network, it was the springboard for our 'snap meeting'. If we were to win £100 we would use it specifically to buy books for the FDTLS students.

We are eagerly awaiting the NSS results for this group and hope to see an improved rating for learning resources this year.

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Student engagement in the support and information zone (SIZ)

Quirky surveys – Father SIZmas



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A new service dawns

In 2012 we opened the door to the University of Chichester's new Student Support service, the Support and Information Zone (SIZ). This was a bold and innovative step to provide a 'one-stop shop' for many front-line services including library, IT, reception, academic registry as well as bookings for the student counsellors and welfare team. Our staff of thirty SIZ advisers was drawn from all these departments to provide a comprehensive knowledge base and ensure information exchange within the team. We had all spent the previous three months following a rigorous training programme rolled out by each of the supporting teams that we would be representing. We launched in January with our SIZ team covering the telephones (all university calls are routed through SIZ), offices and front desks in excited anticipation.

So how did we do?

Well, we thought we did rather well. But of course our perception is not what matters. To measure our performance we need to ask our customers. And to engage with our customers we have to try to understand exactly who they are.

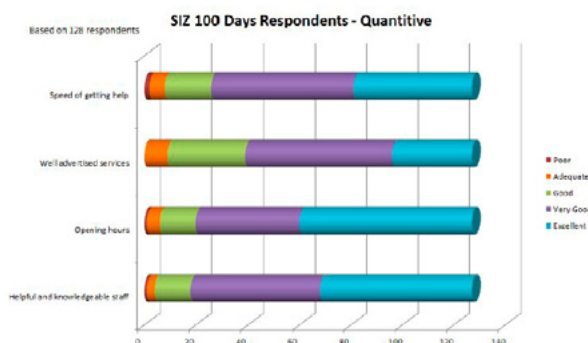
We identified three broad groups – students, staff and members of the public. Of course these can be further refined to identify full-time, part-time, mature, distance learners, international, department, academic, professional services, associates and visitors, including VIPs, Governors, local businesses / schools or members of the public. In April, three months after our launch, we held an initial survey, which we imaginatively called the 'SIZ 100 Day Survey'.

We asked users

- How do you mostly use the SIZ? (multiple-choice answers)
- How would you rate the following aspects of service in the SIZ (1–5, 5 being excellent)
 - helpful and knowledgeable staff?
 - opening hours?
 - well-advertised services?
- In three words what does the SIZ mean to you?
- What could we do better? Any other comments.

The results were published in a poster (see fig. 1).

Results of our '100 days of service' survey (128 respondents)



Speed of getting help We have introduced a queue management system to fast-track certain requests and procedures. Separate channels can be implemented at key times of the year, such as open days, student interviews and auditions.

Well-advertised services We have introduced social media pages and created a comprehensive SIZ guide in collaboration with supporting departments. This was distributed to all new students during induction week. Additionally a slide show is displayed in the foyer area of both LRCs advertising the SIZ services and university events.

Opening hours We have extended opening hours until midnight at busy exam times and are currently surveying students to see if they agree this is the best use of the extra resources.

Helpful and knowledgeable staff We have a continuous training programme in place for all the SIZ team and work closely with our partner departments to review and update procedures. As a team initiative we are working towards a Customer Services award.

Fig. 1 Results of '100 days of service' survey

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Student engagement in the support and information zone (SIZ)

Quirky surveys – Father SIZmas

Other means of feedback

We followed this up with another survey in December, looking at extended opening, and with a mystery shopping exercise in March. In addition, we have two feedback boxes on both front counters and an online feedback button. We attend student forums and programme boards, hold a SIZ user group and encourage our own SIZ staff to record feedback / suggestions in an online tool available to all advisers. This also includes anecdotal feedback, possibly overheard, which could be useful in evaluating what we do.


We encourage each of the SIZ advisers to establish a role as a Key Contact with our supporting departments to continue to develop our understanding of these departments, encourage regular communication, share knowledge and foster positive working relationships. We are also active on Facebook and Twitter.

At Christmas 2013 we hit on the idea of Father SIZmas. This was a light-hearted and festive way to launch a survey at a time that didn't conflict with the NSS. We are lucky enough to have a new purpose-built building at Bognor Regis Campus and a recently refurbished learning resource centre (LRC) at Bishop Otter Campus, so our festively decorated Xmas post boxes looked rather jolly next to the Christmas tree. We designed our forms in such a way as to find out not only what extra service our customers might like from us but also how much awareness there was of two recently introduced services: card payment facilities and the launch of social media.

The post boxes were in place for two weeks before Christmas in each LRC and Santa promised to pick one lucky letter out of his sack and award £10.00 worth of printing credit to the recipient.

Dear Father SIZmas,

Please ask the SIZ team if they can try and provide :



.....

.....

Did you know that we now offer Debit & Credit Card payment facilities?:	Yes / No Please Circle
Did you know that we have a SIZ Twitter Account and Facebook page?	Yes / No Please Circle

From :

Student Number :

Father SIZmas will pull out one letter out of his sack after the 24th December on each campus to receive a £10 print credit .

Fig. 2 Letter to Father SIZmas 2014

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Student engagement in the support and information zone (SIZ)

Quirky surveys – Father SIZmas

Results

As a direct result of feedback from all our surveys we have made the following improvements and enhancements to our service:

- twenty laptops at both campuses available for loan
- online self-booking system for students to book study booths or pcs
- extended hours (midnight closing) increased by three weeks
- queue-minders to fast-track advice and information at peak times
- laptop locks available for loan and a security campaign launched for awareness
- improved wi-fi on both campuses
- dedicated emergency line direct to SIZ for all members of the university
- specialised training for the team in sensitive issues from our counselling teams
- ATM cash machines in each LRC
- introduction of stationery for sale

Before we launched SIZ we held an all-staff awayday where we all agreed that excellent customer service would be our key driver and the cornerstone of our vision; we remain committed to this.

The scope of the services that we deliver is broad and the service is constantly evolving to meet changing needs. We in the Support and Information Zone will continue to be as creative and proactive as we can to ensure we are capturing feedback every step of the way.

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Digging deeper

Developing our capability to understand our users

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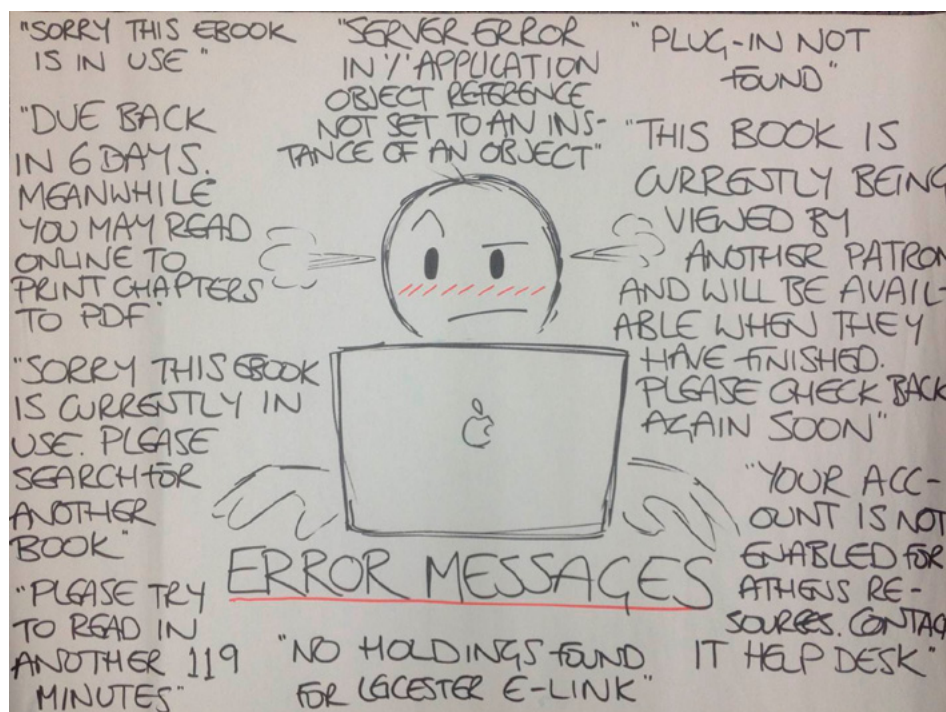
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Introduction

User satisfaction and the student experience have always been our underpinning raison d'être. Our national student survey library satisfaction rating is 92% and we also hold the customer service excellence award; however, we are never ever complacent. Our LibQUAL survey of 2014 saw increased satisfaction, but it also highlighted that our users felt that we could be better at handling their service problems and making electronic resources available. So how could we dig deeper to understand our users better, and what might we further improve?

The systems thinking approach and analysis of 'failure demand'

We decided to use the expertise of the university's change and improvement team, who help re-design processes to make them more efficient and more centred on students through a framework based on the Vanguard systems thinking methodology (Vanguard Consulting 2014). A small team from public services – Jodie Hannis, a supervisor and three library assistants, Heather Baines, Dips Patel and Jen Sutherland – worked with Gretel Stonebridge and Thomas Shepard from the change team to conduct a 'failure demand' exercise (Seddon 2003). They analysed the email enquiries received over the course of a year and drilled down to those where *we were either failing to do something, or failing to do something right for the customer*. They found that although we get contacted by fewer than 1% of users accessing e-resources, the enquiry email services received about a hundred e-resources enquiries monthly, of which 99% are 'failure demand', in the sense defined in italics above. Login problems were a constant issue throughout the year, regardless of how long library users have been at the university, and we are spending at least six weeks of the year helping users login in successfully. The team also identified that users experience problems using the website and e-books. Using these findings, they interviewed and observed students and produced some powerful user experience evidence boards.



Capturing the error messages encountered when using e-books
Photo: Graham Barton

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Digging deeper

Developing our capability to understand our users



Observing what happened when one student searched for an item on the catalogue
Photo: Graham Barton

As a team they have presented their findings to the library management team and the university professional services management team, the latter chaired by the University Registrar. They will also be part of the library and IT services working group, who will be responsible for informing the development of a single login procedure for all members of the university for all purposes.

Focus groups for specific issues

We continue to use focus groups to test assumptions and find out about our users; we have found these to work best when based on specific issues. We held a series of student focus groups in conjunction with the students' union when we were reviewing our loans and fines policies. The groups were given exercises and questions to help draw out their opinions, and this approach received a positive response from many of the participants. The output from the groups was used to scope and produce a survey for all students and staff. The outcome was the introduction of simplified and longer loan periods and fines charged only for overdue recalled items.

We also held a focus group for academic staff because their satisfaction, as expressed in the LibQUAL survey, was lower than that of other users, and we found that we were failing to meet their minimum requirements for 'making electronic resources easily accessible from my home or office' and 'a library website enabling me to locate information on my own'. Through the focus group we established that their main frustration was around authentication and not the range or availability of the content we provide. It has been a timely intervention as it has added further evidence to the need to improve the university authentication process.

Exploring customer personas

We have also been experimenting with other ways to help us understand our users better. The library's marketing and communications group has been developing customer personas to help inform our strategic marketing activities. We used activity data, feedback from student-staff committees, evaluations from teaching sessions and enquiry statistics to create a range of personas that we thought reflected the issues, thoughts and concerns of the student and staff populations. We used focus groups to test these assumptions and to refine the key messages that would appeal and resonate with them. An example

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Digging deeper

Developing our capability to understand our users

of useful feedback was that many postgraduate (taught) students felt that the PhD persona had greater resonance with them than the master's persona. We explored the students' perceptions of existing marketing campaigns and found that their comments about our *More Books!* promotion was that they thought that this was a campaign by the students' union to tell us to buy more books, rather than a being positive approach to students from the library asking them to request items they needed and to be involved in shaping our collections. This shows the true value of digging deeper into what we know about our users and is making us rethink some of the language and strap-lines used in our campaigns.

Demand management

Over the last three years we have also increased both the intensity and variety of demand management activities, all gauged at trying better to understand and satisfy user demand and inform collection development and spending priorities. We use the library management system to produce 'purchase alert' reports three times a week. These list items with three or more holds (reservations). They are analysed and additional copies (with a preference for e-books) are purchased. This ensures that we are reacting quickly to identify pressure points on the collection, increase the number of e-books and identify areas of the collection that need to be developed or are 'in vogue' based on popular dissertation and assignment titles.

We also take a systematic approach to e-book turnaways from our main aggregator suppliers. We analyse the turnaway statistics three times a week during semesters to identify any texts under pressure, and increase the number of copies we can obtain under our licences. We use this data, combined with data from our online reading list system, *readinglists@Leicester*, to inform academic staff of texts that are under pressure. They in turn can tell their students what practical steps we are taking to resolve the matter, thereby enhancing the student experience. The turnaway statistics also provide us with trends at publisher level; this is something we intend to use to inform which of the various patron-driven acquisition and evidence-based selection models we will use.

This approach to demand management has seen an increase in the amount of collections budget spent to support these purchases, rising from £35,000 to £42,000 this year. The proportion of this that is spent on e-books has risen from 11% to over 18% this year. Feedback from students at student-staff committees is increasingly that we should provide e-books rather than print, and our new initiatives are directly supporting the move to e-books.

University initiatives

Our university is also engaged in activities designed to understand our students better. Library staff are actively encouraged to get involved with these changes, consultation and process improvements. They include a project called 'Are students at the heart of our processes?' This brings together students, senior managers and frontline staff to find new ways of working in partnership, undertaking proactive student-staff engagement and supporting reflective practice. Another project, 'I start my studies', is also bringing staff together from across the university to improve the customer journey for new students.

What next?

We shall continue to use these and other methodologies because they result in tangible evidence-based benefits for our users, they support cultural change and provide staff with some very enjoyable and positive development opportunities. The areas into which we shall be digging deeper in the future include a systems thinking intervention conducted with our IT Services colleagues and focusing on the enquiry service that we provide jointly in the

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Digging deeper

Developing our capability to understand our users

library help zone. We shall also further develop our work on personas, and we expect to undertake some further systems thinking interventions in preparation for the implementation of our new library systems platform next Easter. In order to build on the notion of 'failure demand' we also intend to introduce staff training and development activities around the theme of handling and solving problems.

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Knowing your customer

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Library colleagues know best

It is every library's aim to exceed the expectations of its users by providing great collections and great service. But do we really know what those expectations are, and better still, do we know how our customers perceive our valiant efforts? Are we working from experience and knowledge of behaviours gained over time, and do we have any informed idea of what might lie ahead? Should our provision reflect what's wanted or should we lead and challenge? Or both?

In an effort to answer some of these questions, Manchester University Library designed a strategic market research project that would reach across our customer segments, services and key buildings. In this way we intended to understand synergies, conflicts, perceptions, myths and realities to inform both our day-to-day business and our future development.



Fig. 1 Infographics

A library with such a huge and diverse range of users, buildings and services is open to uneven development or emphasis on particular priorities and areas of work. For an organisation of any size, a well-rounded overview and objective assessment combined with systematic forecasting will build a more relevant and successful offer.

We undertook three projects:

- in-depth study of our student cohorts, tracked year on year;

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- qualitative research with our researchers to understand their work, career progression and research needs;
- in-depth study of the visitors to our visitor attraction, the John Rylands Library.

This article will describe the work we did with students, the action we took and the results.

In 2012 at Manchester we embarked on an ambitious strategic plan with many visionary and innovative ideas to change, re-evaluate and improve our offer. To inform our plan, and to develop a method of tracking our achievements, the strategic market research project was essential.

Asking the questions

Quantitative data

Mindful that an online questionnaire requires respondents to have some connection with the library, the digital questionnaire was balanced with street surveys. These captured the 'disengaged' and self-defined 'non library user'.

The questions, designed in collaboration with external professionals to ensure objectivity, covered current use and perception, future needs, probes on particular services, study behaviours and mobile device behaviour. A representative and demographic sample was taken across discipline, year, level and mode of study.

Qualitative data

The answers from the quantitative survey informed the focus group discussions. In addition, over 100 videos were made of students using the library over 24 hours at three key sites. As they entered the buildings our researchers asked permission to shadow and film them as they carried out their task.

What we found out in 2013

On a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 is not at all likely and 10 is very likely, how likely would you be to recommend the University of Manchester Library to a friend or colleague?
Base: 1145

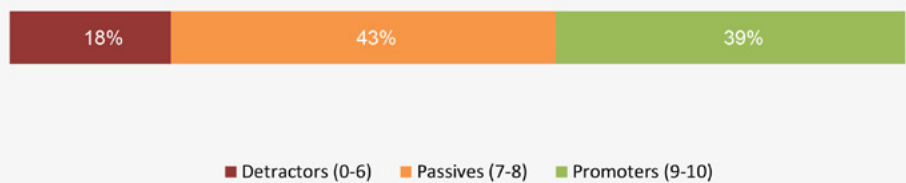


Fig. 2 Detractors and promoters

Perception questions probe what the customer feels about the library. People who do not recommend the library, described as detractors, are a highly influential and vocal group. This is one of our most important measures, because they can 'squeeze' the group described as passives, who have no strong feelings one way or the other.

When asked 'What could the library do better?' answers focused, unsurprisingly, on providing more books, more space and more PCs. However, deeper questioning revealed an apparent loss of sight of our 'core' business.

One major cause for concern from the results was the difficulty our students faced when trying to locate material in our two largest sites. Although the layout of a historic building can cause navigational difficulty, the Dewey system and the signage in our locations were also problematic for students. One

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Knowing your customer

video showed an engineering student on his first trip to the library taking thirty minutes to locate a single book. The services of staff were used three times in the search.



Fig. 3 Finding a book!

It wasn't just about finding material. In our flagship Alan Gilbert Learning Commons we were able to measure the perception of the building as busy, and study space hard to find.

Our videos showed that students were unfamiliar with where to look for PCs in our Main Library, and they often gave up and left.

Our newly implemented online Library Search did not fare well in the research, with some students fearing it was broken.

We took action!

The library Leadership Team and library teams quickly addressed the question of the difficulty of finding books and spaces to study. The greatest change was the introduction of a campaign we call 'Exam extra'. Using a mixed model of student ambassadors, our own staff and our security team, we increased the visibility of personal help.

Having colleagues easily identifiable and available for assistance as students entered the building, supporting these staff with rovers for each building, identifying which floors had PC or study space capacity, and communicating this, had a huge impact. Staff gave meeting rooms over to study space and extra furniture was brought in to increase capacity. Revision and wellbeing sessions were well advertised. All the activity was branded as an identifiable and integrated campaign.

Finding stuff

We put over 500 new bay ends on our shelving, and students helped us identify the most baffling complexities of the buildings so we could reposition and install new signage.

A project team already working on our search issues went into overdrive to focus on the issues highlighted in the research.

Our Teaching and Learning team revamped the induction period, which is now

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Knowing your customer

phased over the entire year and is aligned to the student cycle.

Did it work?

In 2014 at the same time of year we repeated the market research. Removing the questions from the online survey relating to strategy and behaviour we tracked performance and perception. Replacing videos with mystery shoppers across three sites, we were able to measure any actual perception of change in service at first hand.

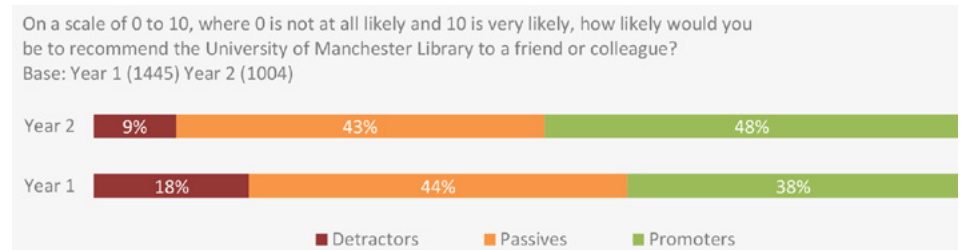


Fig. 4 Detractors reduced by half in one year

We were delighted to see that our detractors reduced by half to only 9% and were 'squeezed' by an increase in promoters of 10%. When asked whether the library had got worse, got better or stayed the same, an amazing 32% said it had got better. This is praise indeed by any commercial measure.

We were particularly pleased that all the 'mystery shoppers' found the randomly selected books they were asked to look for in five minutes at our Main Library and had little trouble using our Library Search. Finding electronic journals off campus remains an issue, however.

Our study space still appears to be difficult to locate in the Learning Commons with around fifteen minutes reported as the average time needed to find a place.

Lessons learned over the two market research projects

Visibility

Visibility of staff and their obvious availability to help has been key to changing perception. That moment when you enter a large, complicated and busy building is softened by the sight of someone who could help you, even if you don't need it. The greeter's delicate balance as to whether to make eye contact, smile or speak is a skill, and as the customer hesitates, wondering where to find the floor, the PC or the space they want, their presence is reassuring. Of course staff are at the reception desk and get approached all the time, but even the friendliest team can't take the place of the low-key greeter at a busy time.

Embedding information

Focus groups identified embarrassment about asking for help; the longer the student is at university, the worse it gets. They feel they are supposed to know.



Fig. 5 Different kinds of learning space

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Knowing your customer

A systemic programme of 'revealing' information at the point of need during the student cycle rather than weighting campaign messages around Welcome or first-year induction has begun to take effect.

Raising standards

Students reported very positively on the improvement of face-to-face help and let it be known that this level of support should be available in evenings and weekends!

Core business

Improving the access to our material and our study spaces has led to a more positive awareness of other services, for example our training offer, My Learning Essentials.

As we approach the major £30 million redevelopment building project of our Main Library, the number of students recommending the library could be expected to decrease, making the need for visible help even more critical. Understanding changes in perception year on year will support our strategy of investment in both time and money.



Fig. 6 Alan Gilbert Learning Commons

Together with the information gained from the other two research projects our plans will integrate and align to support our holistic approach... That's the plan anyway!

Comments from students 2013

- 'It's quite big so when you walk in you don't know where you are going.'
- 'I wouldn't ask for help, in case it's something really stupid.'

Quotations from students 2014

- 'In the library there is always space, but in the Learning Commons it is harder.'
- 'I've noticed a more supportive atmosphere.'
- 'It's overall very conducive to private study.'
- 'I've noticed a more supportive atmosphere.'

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Stop over-thinking

Basic tools for understanding stakeholder needs

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If you are like me, you attend conferences and read papers about innovative ways of gathering stakeholder requirements and feedback, return to your office welling with enthusiasm, then <you fill in the blank> absorbs your attention. Weeks pass before you can re-kindle your excitement about the *other university's* great approach to stakeholder engagement. And how did they find the time to do anything anyway?

Having chastised myself for never quite finding the time to do much more than keeping the doors open, I have decided to stop over-thinking and get on with using some basic tools for understanding *stakeholder* needs. I use the term stakeholder intentionally as the services I lead require understanding the needs of a range of groups.

The tools: process mapping, web surveys, exit surveys and observational techniques. I have found that these tools, augmented by our standard feedback tools (e.g. suggestion and course feedback forms), representation at institutional committees and groups as well as the plethora of UK national surveys, provide useful information about stakeholder needs and their impressions of our services.

The landscape

SOAS Library is one of the world's leading academic libraries for the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The library houses over 1.3 million volumes at the SOAS campus at Russell Square in central London as well as significant archives, special collections and a range of electronic resources. SOAS Library is one of three divisions in a converged service. SOAS LIS comprises:

- Research Library (RL): main library and Special Collections Reading Room
- Customer Services and Operations (CSOps): Customer Services, IT Service Desk, IT Training, Multimedia Services (including teaching environment and conference support), and Print Services
- Information Systems (IS): ICT, network services, and corporate business systems

I lead the CSOps division, which is the most converged of all of the divisions. With such a diverse range of stakeholders, it is easy to get tied in knots trying to learn what the stakeholders expect and how to respond with any agility. Major surveys for this range of services, though extremely useful, take time to plan and must be coordinated across the institution to avoid repetition and survey fatigue. So, to get some understanding of stakeholder expectations in a timely manner, I went back to the basic tools and stopped over-thinking the process of gathering requirements and feedback.

Process mapping – as is and to be

CSOps works closely with the Registry department to support the student registration process by producing identification cards, and enabling access to the library. Having received training on a technique for process mapping, I facilitated a session for the Registry department, one of our key stakeholder groups, to simplify the process of students changing their degree programmes. As we use student record information to determine access to our services, we have an interest in receiving status changes as soon as possible. And Registry and our academic departments want to ensure that students receive the correct entitlements in a timely manner. By facilitating the review, I was able to work through the process with staff from Admissions, Registry, Planning, academic departments (teaching, research, and administrative), IS and a student union representative. Process mapping involves walking through the existing process creating a flowchart illustrating each step. This sounds easy, but what is quickly discovered in a room full of people who work through a process daily is that they do not always agree on how the process actually works. Or they

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Stop over-thinking

Basic tools for understanding stakeholder needs

understand their part of the process but have never understood the process end-to-end. Once each stage of the process is represented visually, it often becomes clear that the process is unnecessarily complex. As facilitator, I worked with the group to identify the unnecessary elements of the process and to develop a more streamlined version. Although the stakeholders in the room agreed the need to simplify the process, negotiation between the parties to agree a final, simplified process was crucial to ensure buy-in.

Process mapping is a useful method of reviewing processes and procedures to verify that they remain fit for purpose and/or meet the needs of the stakeholders. All that is required is the right people in a room, a facilitator, and a means of recording the process as is and as it will be.



Process map: No tech... still does the trick
Photo: R. Everitt

Web survey – Focused feedback

The Multimedia team in CSOPs supports teaching environments for SOAS. I received feedback from academic administrators that some academic staff members preferred the standard computer lab provision that contains foreign language software and headphones rather than the specialist language lab. Although I solicited and received feedback from staff members about the provision, I needed a steer about the future of the specialist provision as the room was due for a software upgrade. I toyed with the idea of focus groups to discuss how the space was being used. However, as many academic staff members work part-time, it would have been difficult to get everyone in one room. I received a list of everyone who used the specialist provision from the timetabling team and contacted the stakeholders to get targeted feedback about how they used the space.

I created a short survey monkey questionnaire asking about use of the specialist versus generic provision. I sent the link to those who had used the room and gathered feedback over a period of one month. I received a 50% return rate from the questionnaire. The output suggested that the specialist provision was still considered useful, but training on its use would be beneficial.

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Stop over-thinking

Basic tools for understanding stakeholder needs

The software upgrade of the specialist provision is under way and I will be working with the IT training coordinator to add an induction session about the use of the specialist provision to the training programme.

Exit surveys

After going through security procedures at an airport, I noticed kiosks asking about my experience of getting through the security checks. It struck me that this was a simple way of gathering useful feedback about a specific service delivery. The response options were simple: smiley face, indifferent face or sad face. There was also an option for additional comments. The kiosks were positioned near the security checks, thus focusing user comments on that 'service.'

During a sample week to capture information to contribute to user satisfaction benchmarking for UK higher education institutions, we gave out simple feedback cards asking users how they felt their enquiry had been handled. This focused the stakeholder's response on the enquiry rather than concerns around the environment that tend to dominate our standard feedback forms. Stakeholders were asked to leave their cards in boxes near the exit of the library. We received a 93.6% satisfaction rate during that sample period.

As we provide a range of walk-up stakeholder services in the library, we wanted to capture stakeholder experience of these services. So, on a separate occasion, a member of staff met stakeholders as they exited the library and asked them a few questions about what they had come to the library to do and whether they had been successful. We found that 63% of those who responded during the sample week came into the library to seek study space. This was unsurprising as we were on the run-up to the busy exam periods. This information reinforced that we had to balance the need to prioritise access for our internal stakeholders with honouring our commitment to access schemes. The remaining responses were about coming to the library to access resources; most stakeholders got what they were looking for and others provided useful information about materials they could not locate or difficulties with printers/copiers.

Observational

I was keen to encourage library stakeholders to use the self-service machines for basic transactions to release staff from solely desk-based interaction with stakeholders. However, desk staff flagged up the fact that stakeholders often returned to the service point for assistance after attempting to use the machines. Usage of the machines was high overall as these machines are the only means of issuing/returning items when the service points are closed during late evenings and on Sundays. I wanted to understand what issues stakeholders were encountering while using these machines.

A library staff member observed stakeholder behaviour at the machines during a sample week to try to capture what they were doing before they sought assistance from other library staff members. He recorded the transactions, the errors or blocks that appeared, and whether the stakeholder was using the machine correctly. He found a range of issues: a desensitiser that needed to be adjusted, stakeholders not positioning books so that they could be desensitised, and rules that forced stakeholders to the desk potentially unnecessarily, to name a few findings. Routine maintenance of the machines dealt with any issues with desensitisers. Where feasible, we showed stakeholders how to position books so that they could be desensitised correctly; this was augmented by the display on the monitor which showed stakeholders how to position items. And as we were planning to move to a new library management system, we planned to review the rules to ensure that we were not unnecessarily sending people to the service points for assistance.

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Stop over- thinking

Basic tools for understanding stakeholder needs

Just get on with it

SOAS LIS has undergone a number of changes in the last few years in an effort to improve service delivery. We are due for a comprehensive survey of our diverse stakeholders to better understand what we are doing well and where we need to improve. In the meantime, we shall continue to use these quick and basic tools to respond to stakeholder needs with more agility. Fed up with over-thinking, I have decided to just get on with it!

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Embracing the student voice

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Whilst developing the Newcastle University Library's first marketing and communications strategy and considering our next accreditation for Customer Service Excellence in 2013, we identified certain deficiencies in the way we collected and used student opinion to inform our service plans and decision making. Neither did we feel we were satisfactorily exploiting the richness of all of the qualitative and quantitative data we were gathering regarding student behaviour.

We were interested in adopting a relationship marketing approach. Over the past decade 'relationship marketing' has come to the fore. Kotler and Fox (Kotler & Fox, 1995) in their six-step developmental model describe marketing as developing from a mechanistic and transactional approach into being an integral part of a service organisation's strategic planning and relationship management. Relationship marketing requires a shift towards including customers in all stages of developing and reviewing services, rather than just telling them about the services that an organisation currently provides. This helps deliver truly customer-focused services and encourages customers to become advocates and support the delivery of key messages in their immediate environments. As Terry Kendrick notes, customer relationship management in a library context is a strategy based on '...sustained and focused use of user information, to attract and keep users through ongoing conversations which build long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationships' (Kendrick, 2006, p. 121).

The task we set ourselves was to plan and evidence customer engagement systematically as part of any significant service development we were considering and / or undertaking. We feel we are starting to achieve this through the multiplicity of approaches we are now regularly using. None of these approaches is unique to us, often being borrowed from other universities' good practice; however, what we think we are doing differently is how we are combining the different approaches in order to increase our reach as well as deepening our level of engagement. Once we have discerned the question(s) we want to ask, we ask them in many different ways and are using many different communication channels in order to make sure we are taking the conversation out to the where the students are. For example we may ask for preferences via a ball poll sited in the library, an online virtual wall, Facebook or Twitter as well as discussing the issues at staff / student committees, with the Newcastle Student Union and through focus groups. Students have commended us for the way we have done this and have cited us as a good example of engagement with them.

Maintaining interest and keeping the conversation going requires effort and creativity. Therefore we have been eager to work in partnership with students not only to build capacity to undertake all this work but also to help keep our communications fresh.

We have used the Newcastle University work experience scheme (Newcastle University Careers, 2014) a number of times in order to recruit students to undertake a variety of benchmarking and market research exercises. Through this scheme the library can pay for students to undertake an agreed programme of work over a fixed number of hours that will offer them opportunities to develop specific employability skills. When we were planning the refurbishment of two study floors for the Robinson Library, we employed two students to undertake customer research, one being a business studies undergraduate and the other being a PhD student with a research interest related to design of museum space. Working together, they created an investigative programme that included observation of current spaces, a quick exit poll, exercises in which students selected pictures of study spaces they preferred and some focus groups. In their allocated 100 hours they achieved what we simply did not have the time to do. Their finding took us by surprise, as we were expecting demand for more social space, but they came back with

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Embracing the student voice

strong arguments for more traditional silent space. As a follow-up to this work, we employed another PhD student, this time from the School of Education, to run a further programme of observation and focus groups to review how the refurbishment was now working for students.

Other work experience placements we have offered have included researching study skills support models used in different universities and seeking academic and student opinion of current provision at Newcastle University. We are currently recruiting to a series of work placements, which will help with benchmarking and seeking opinions about our information literacy and writing development online resources. This is in preparation for a programme of work we hope to undertake during 2016 to create a new portfolio of open educational resources.

Over the past 18 months we have also successfully piloted and established a Student Library Communications Team following a similar model to that which our Careers Service employs. Each academic year we recruit up to twelve students to undertake promotional and customer research related activities. The interview process has proved very interesting as it involves a ten-minute 'audition' to which candidates bring a prepared pitch to persuade new students that use of a library is beneficial. We also ask to them to bring a Tweet to promote the library. Just going through the process of interviewing students for the team provides us with some rather surprising insight into what they and their friends think of us!

The students are employed on casual contracts via the University 'JobsSoc' agency so there is no obligation on either party. We will contact them, usually by email, to ask for members to offer to undertake specific activities / assignments as they arise. To date these have included:

- handing out promotional fliers and postcards on campus
- conducting quick surveys on campus
- participating in focus groups and in some cases letting them recruit and lead on focus groups
- conducting tours for prospective students on open days
- mystery shopping at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities
- providing feedback on publicity.

Some students are more committed than others, but generally we can get sufficient participants to undertake these quick assignments. Library Communication Team hoodies are now a common sight on our campus, with the team members often canvassing opinion or promoting our services on our behalf. The feedback they get is probably more insightful than we would ever be able to achieve, and they are always prepared to discuss the responses they have received, which adds value to the process.

Not only are we creating our own opportunities to work with students as co-creators, we also use schemes and programmes being operated elsewhere in the university. For example since 2013 first-year students have been allocated a student mentor as part of the university's offer. These mentors are expected to meet regularly with a small group of new students to listen to and discuss the issues they are facing as they transition into higher education. We see these student mentors as potentially some of our strongest advocates, and investing in their development is important. We do this in various light-touch ways, including contributing ideas and resources to their training programme and having named library contacts for support if and when needed. It is interesting to note that as the scheme has matured, student mentors are not only using the library as a venue to meet mentees but are also conducting their own informal tours.

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Embracing the student voice

We are analysing the feedback in more detail, whether it be feedback received via a staff / student committee, module evaluation forms, our feedback scheme, a University survey or indeed a casual conversation with a library staff member. Routinely monitoring a range of social media channels has reaped some interesting customer insight.

The collation of this feedback has helped us to

- demonstrate that we are listening to the student voice
- build convincing arguments for further investment
- encourage students to continue to engage with us
- get service enhancements and changes right first time.

Adopting a methodological triangulation approach has also helped us demonstrate the credibility of our findings.

For instance we are currently planning the transformation of a former office building into a fourth library site due to be opened in January 2016. The building was acquired by the university after we had evidenced the need using study space usage statistics and after considering the concerns students were raising with us via social media, staff–student committees, the Student Union’s sabbatical officers and our ‘Tell us what you think’ scheme. Whilst planning this new library we have continued to look for opportunities to get student opinion on its configuration, facilities and services. So far this has ranged from inviting students to test out chair designs to running a very popular, though at times controversial, communications campaign to canvass for ideas for the library’s new name. Of course we also arranged for the Education Sabbatical Officer to have an early tour of the building, which he subsequently tweeted and talked about. This has not only helped with our planning, but has also allayed some students’ concerns about library space issues.

Integrating student engagement into our strategic and operational service planning is not always easy and can require considerable time and effort. However, the rewards from investing in an ongoing and open two-way dialogue with students are far reaching.

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A fresh start for LIS promotion

Planning and evaluating our freshers fair experience



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Last year saw the learning and information services (LIS) team at Chester take on the freshers fair. The department had never been involved with the fair before so this was a new opportunity to engage with the students and promote our services. We hope that our insights and reflections will help to pave the way for our future at the fair and encourage others who are considering a similar challenge.

Student induction at Chester

Historically, the first chance for interaction between Chester undergraduates and library staff has been on the very first day of freshers week. All first-year students were ushered through an induction schedule introducing them to LIS and other support departments. They would watch a short video summarising library and IT services and log on to a computer in order to familiarise themselves with essential online tools such as email, timetables and the library catalogue.

Heading in to 2014 it was decided that it was time for a change. The majority of processes students were previously expected to complete under our guidance would now be done online, with videos and information fed to them via the pre-arrival website and university mobile app. This posed a dilemma in that LIS staff would no longer get this opportunity to meet and interact with the students so early on. Although we see many students during library inductions and tours, these are not always requested by academic departments and are often arranged later in the term. There were concerns about the impact this might have on the helpdesk and other front-facing services; all students use our online services (e.g. email and the Moodle virtual learning environment), but we felt that it was imperative for them to see the department as approachable and personable.

The freshers fair

We turned to the freshers fair – without ‘induction Monday’, this seemed the perfect opportunity to reach out to students and showcase our services. This was no small challenge; we are a large and wide-ranging department, providing an integrated library and IT service at a number of sites of varying sizes across the north west of England. A working party of nine staff, representing a range of job roles and sites, was put together and a list of objectives was formed:

- to represent LIS as a whole (including two fundamental IT elements: the university’s managed Internet access and mobile application)
- to be approachable, engaging and relevant
- to gain feedback to inform future years at the fair.

Learning from others

As this was something of a pilot project we wanted to learn from the experience of others. Members of the working party contacted other institutions for advice and we gained some amazingly helpful insights and practical guidance. This advice gave us somewhere to begin and came down to four main points:

- **Have a presence** – the main aim is to be a friendly face. Just being there shows that we are engaged with the whole student experience.
- **Be proactive** – to create a positive engaging experience it is essential to be interactive, motivated and enthusiastic. In order to maintain enthusiasm, the stall was covered on a rota basis by staff volunteers.
- **Keep things simple** – students are bombarded with information at the fair and there is a limited amount of time to spend with them, so interactions

A fresh start for LIS promotion

Planning and evaluating our freshers fair experience

and printed materials need to be kept simple, short and sweet.

- **Provide freebies** – to have any chance of being successful, goodies and giveaways are a must. Students attending the fair expect freebies and there is strong competition for their attention. With a limited budget we knew this would be a tough challenge!

The plans

It was decided early on that we wanted to create a large mock-up of a mobile device to showcase the university app. A presentation was created using the free online software Prezi (<https://prezi.com/6zg6dntsdnam/uoc-mobile-app/>) and was displayed on a framed plasma screen. This provided a unique way to demonstrate the features of the app and create visual appeal.

The appearance of the app ties in with our departmental branding, which inspired the rest of our designs. We started sourcing freebies, looking to our in-house graphics team and print unit in order to keep costs down. With their help we designed a range of items that we put together into an 'info-pack' for students, including:

- library guides
- a 'beer mat' featuring a QR code to the LIS website
- notepads
- a short quiz
- flyers for our 'shelfie' competition
- plastic card wallets



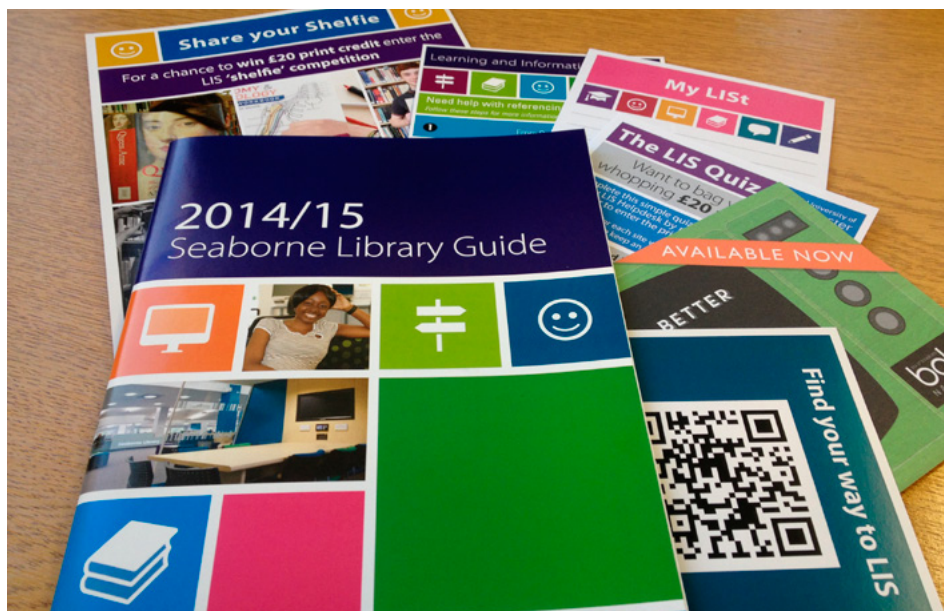
Card wallets

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Planning and evaluating our freshers fair experience



Info-packs

Our students' union emphasised the importance of freebies in drawing the crowds, and advice from other institutions gave us an idea of what type of items would be most successful in getting student attention. With this in mind we contacted our suppliers for useful items to give away, which resulted in a weird and wonderful assortment including stationery, postcards and even some umbrellas.

Along with the quiz, the shelfie competition was aimed at drawing students into the library by challenging them to find a book, then take and submit a 'shelfie' photograph to be entered into a prize draw. Our definition of a shelfie was kept very loose to encourage participation. Inspired by images of book blending we found on Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/sthlibraries/book-cover-blending/> [accessed 23 June 2014]) we took some shelfies of our own; these were used to create promotional posters and flyers. We anticipated a range of entries including photographs of books on shelves, book blends and straightforward selfies in the library. We set up a designated email address to receive student submissions.

	Share your Shelfie			Share your Shelfie	
For a chance to win £20 print credit enter the LIS 'shelfie' competition			For a chance to win £20 print credit enter the LIS 'shelfie' competition		
			What do I need to do? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Go to a university library and find a library catalogue PC or Mac. (hint: follow signs to the books or ask a member of staff) 2. Type in a subject (What are you studying? Combined student? Just pick one) 3. Pick a title you think sounds interesting and click on it 4. Make a note of the 'shelved at number' 5. Use the library guides dotted around to locate the number on the shelves. 6. Pull out your book and strike a pose – you can be as creative as you like! 7. Email your photo, along with your student number and the subject you searched for to: shelfie@chester.ac.uk 		
<small>Please respect other library users when taking your shelfie, particularly in quiet and silent study areas.</small>			<small>We'll display some of the best pictures on our plasma screens across campus.</small>		
Email your: photo, student number and the subject you searched for to: shelfie@chester.ac.uk			Email your: photo, student number and the subject you searched for to: shelfie@chester.ac.uk		
Learning and Information Services			Learning and Information Services		

Shelfie competition flyers

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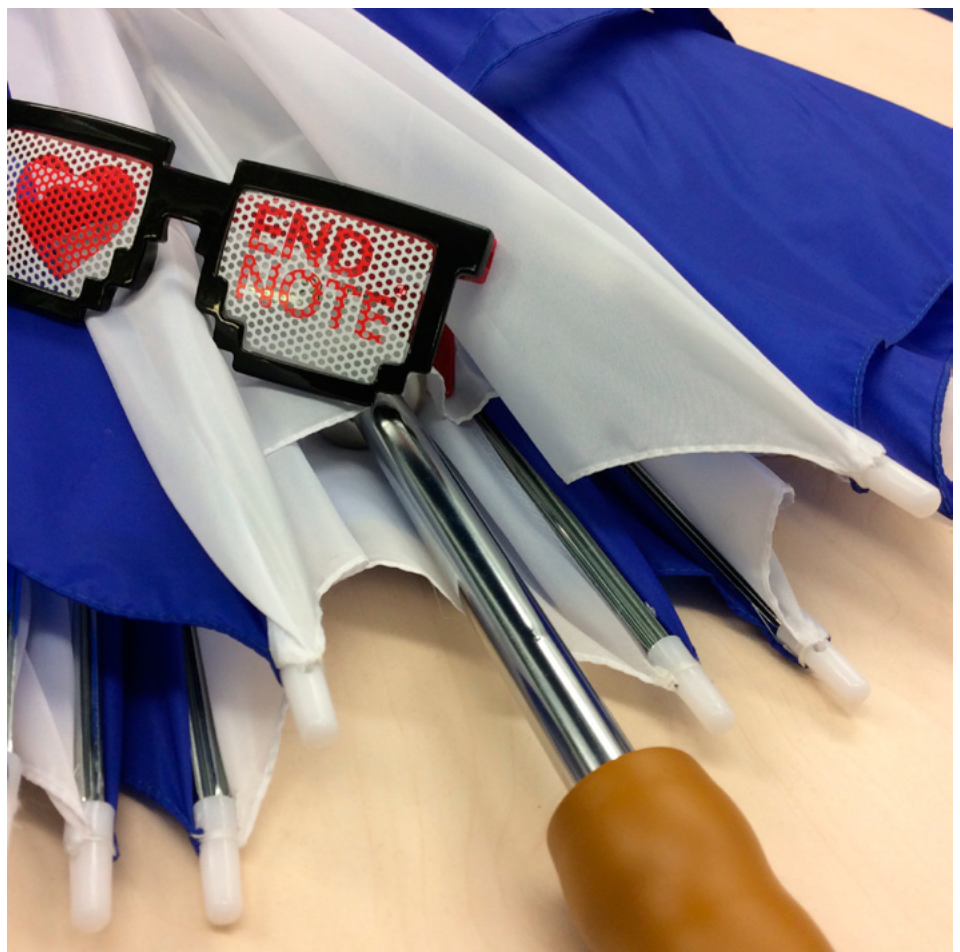
Planning and evaluating our freshers fair experience

Once our final plans had been drawn up the staff on the stall were briefed for the event, ensuring that the vision for the day was clear and shared by all.

The big day

The stall at the main Chester campus was located in a tepee constructed specially for freshers week outside the student union building – this placed us with other internal support departments from the university, and at the opposite side of the campus from the main fair where external and commercial groups were based. At the Warrington campus, the event was smaller, with fewer student numbers expected, and all stalls were located in the sports hall.

We used bunting, freebies and flyers to create a bright appealing stand at both locations and the mobile app display made a distinctive focal point – no one else had anything so high-tech. All visitors were given an info-pack, free pen and the chance to select a prize at random from a grab box of freebies. It was brilliant to see each team come up with their own creative ideas around the more unusual items, awarding prizes through spontaneous mini competitions and quizzes.



Stall freebies

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Stall at Warrington campus



Stall in Chester Campus tepee

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Planning and evaluating our freshers fair experience



Volunteer at the Chester stall

Evaluation

The day itself seemed to operate smoothly, and this was largely due to our preparation and planning. Relying on staff who had volunteered for this job turned out to be crucial to our success – they were enthusiastic, engaging and resourceful. Following the event we asked them for feedback on their experience and received very encouraging responses. They enjoyed the informal interactions and felt that this type of event was important for establishing a positive relationship between the students and the department.

To gain an idea of the number of students we interacted with on the day, we calculated the number of info-packs that had been handed out. As our core giveaway this was the most reliable measure. Based on our initial expectations the numbers were slightly disappointing. At the Chester campus, we felt this was partly because we hadn't been based in the main fair amongst the commercial stalls and saw fewer students in the smaller tepee.

The data from the QR code and competitions proved less reliable, with responses dependent on student participation in follow-up activities. The quiz had the highest response rate and we saw students from all year groups entering, which may have been a result of its visibility at library helpdesks. Whilst this type of competition was effective for engaging students, it didn't quite fit into the context of the fair. Sadly, the selfie competition, which was a popular idea amongst colleagues, didn't really work. On reflection we feel that the competition was limited by the fact that the department doesn't use social media; an email address simply doesn't have the immediacy and social appeal of Twitter or Facebook. However, we had a positive response to the idea from the students' union, and with a few modifications and better promotion we can see it has potential for success.

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A fresh start for LIS promotion

Planning and evaluating our freshers fair experience

Lessons learned and the future of the freshers fair

In evaluating our success we came up with some key observations for future events:

- **Communication and teamwork** are vital for success. Contact with other universities was critical and we were dependent on internal links with our graphics team and print unit, not to mention the collaboration between the working party and the stall volunteers. In future we hope to make use of the support of the students' union earlier on, particularly with ideas such as the shelfie competition.
- **Promotion** of our services doesn't have to be limited to a single day or event. We approached the event with an expectation that 'the people will come', and therefore hadn't considered actively promoting our presence at the fair.
- **Freebies** were important to make the stall appealing and attractive. It was good to have a mixture of useful items, and a few novelty freebies helped to build hype and attention e.g. umbrellas, EndNote sunglasses.
- **Measuring impact.** In order to inform planning for future events, it is useful to have a reliable means of calculating how many students are seen on the day. A single core giveaway gives an accurate and measurable figure to record and compare year on year.
- **Know your audience and context.** As this was our first fair we kept the plans broad and inclusive. We now know there's more scope for tailoring our approach to the two particular sites to take account of the different characters of the venues (e.g. the volume of students, amount of space, number and type of stalls and noise levels).

Conclusion

In retrospect, we can see that whilst we had set out to keep this event simple, we were rather ambitious in some of our plans. In some ways this was unavoidable, as our greatest limitation was our inexperience.

Overall our first year at the fair was a success. Although we have yet to finalise our plans for freshers fair 2015 we're hoping to return. There is much anticipation and enthusiasm amongst the team and we're keen to build on our ideas for a greater impact. The freshers fair is a significant landmark in the student experience so we need to be a part of it. For our department this was a big step towards a different style of promotion and it presents a unique opportunity for early, informal and positive interaction with students.

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Academic staff perceptions and use of reading lists for book ordering



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The academic library has been in a perpetual state of flux since the emergence of technologies that have changed the shape and scope of how we operate, what we offer in terms of services and resources, and how we communicate with our customers, both students and faculty alike. These factors have been significant catalysts in many of the changes that have taken place in Library and Learning Services (LLS) at the University of Northampton over the last decade. Keeping abreast of up-to-date technology that can enhance both the student and staff experience has been fundamental in the implementation of certain software packages. Talis Aspire, in particular, has been a relatively recent LLS acquisition that was obtained to help streamline and standardise the creation and maintenance of reading lists and to assist in the ordering of current and the most relevant resources for each academic course (Talis, 2015).

Indeed, the driving force behind a cross-team research project undertaken by members of LLS staff in 2014 was the ordering process itself and how it could be improved for our customer base, from resource request to availability. After a successful bid, the project secured internal funding from the LLS research fund. The team comprised an academic librarian, a meta-data specialist, the acquisitions manager and two information assistants – one resource management based and one customer service based. The rationale for involving staff who spanned different teams was to ensure that every aspect of the acquisitions process was interrogated to see where potential enhancements to the service could be made.

This research follows on from an earlier research project that looked at how students used reading lists (Siddall and Rose, 2014); tutors had been interviewed, and lamented students' lack of use of journals, and yet few had listed them on their reading lists. This led to the question of how academics chose what to put on their reading lists. While the student experience was the main consideration of this project, the means to reach this end was of the greatest concern. Fundamentally, what gave this project its original scope was its focus on the academics' experience and their knowledge of the processes involved. The research team wanted to understand what kind of barriers they faced when ordering new resources. The questions under consideration were, how do academics select new resources for their courses, and, more importantly, how do they use their reading lists in general and Talis Aspire in particular as resource procurement tools?

Money awarded by the LLS research fund allowed the team to devise and set up a survey using Bristol Online Surveys. This was sent out via email to faculty members by the academic librarian responsible for each faculty and ran for the duration of one month.

The survey

The survey comprised fourteen questions, of which five had sub-questions that sought to qualify the answer and/or expand on the initial question. Most of the questions were multiple-choice, though some called for a more qualified answer or extended comment.

The projected response rate was 50 respondents; in the event 46 faculty members participated. This represented only 8% of the 586 academic tutors who lecture at the University of Northampton; however, those who did engage with the survey for the most part were spread fairly evenly across the academic faculties – business (5 respondents), arts (7), social sciences (9), and education (3). The faculty of health attracted the most 21 academics respondents, while science and technology went unrepresented. The majority (60.9%) had worked at the university for six years or more, while 34.8% had been employed between one and five years. Only two out of the 46 were newly employed by the University of Northampton.

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Academic staff perceptions and use of reading lists for book ordering

The survey was in four sections and was designed to target the particular research aims of the project. Section one focused on individual details, i.e. academic subject area and length of employment, how respondents keep up to date with research in their field and their personal view on the purpose of the reading list. Section two broadened into reading lists, asking how respondents decide what to include on the reading list. It also asked whether any supplementary material, i.e. reading that does not appear on the reading list, is recommended to students, and how this is brought to students' attention. We also asked how often the reading list is updated, whether the relevant academic librarian is notified of any changes, whether there is colleague collaboration on individual reading lists and what resources are included. Section three dealt with the ordering process and was devised to discover whether individual faculty members were involved in ordering their own resources, how they went about it and what type of resources they were (print, e-book, multi-media, journal subscription, digitised chapters and articles and other). The final section asked the respondents if they would be interested in taking part in further research into LLS ordering processes (focus groups), and requested additional comments regarding the academics' experience of ordering and accessing resources through LLS.

The results

When analysing the responses it was noted that there was a congruity between how individual faculty members keep up to date with the research in their particular fields, and the materials they include on their reading lists. Overwhelmingly, inspection copies of monographs and textbooks, and literature searches (with 35 and 34 responses respectively), are the primary sources of their information about new areas of research. This was closely followed by publications through professional bodies with which the faculty members are affiliated (32 respondents). Thus, professional networks are a significant source of alerts to new resources, as indeed are departmental colleagues (as 29 of the respondents illustrated). Perhaps surprisingly, alerts such as Zetoc and mailing lists were considered less influential, although publisher lists and catalogues were marginally more useful, with 13 and 23 respondents respectively saying that they utilise these media in their selection of resources.

Noticeably, when analysing the academics' approach to reading lists (i.e. what are they and what do they do), there is a significant variance between individuals' perception of both the function and the utility of the reading list itself. The most common descriptor that emerged in thirteen of the comments was that the reading list was seen as a 'guide'. Other words that were occurred frequently in individual comments on the reading list's purpose were 'provide', 'direct' and 'inform'. The comments were apportioned between those who saw the reading list as indicative of required reading incorporating key texts, and those who saw the reading list as a 'signpost', which had the dual purpose of setting out the required reading as well as suggested or recommended reading around the particular study topic. Thus, establishing a one-size-fits-all definition or purpose of the reading list from the comments proved problematic. All agreed, though, that the reading list should be up to date, relevant and at the right academic level for the students' particular needs.

Defining the reading list from the survey commentary was challenging. In addition, the response to question 6 – 'Do you recommend additional reading that is not on your reading lists?' – was of particular interest. Overwhelmingly, 36 (78.3%) of the respondents stated they did indeed provide extra material and resources beyond their reading lists, whether through PowerPoint (19 respondents), the virtual learning environment (13 respondents), orally in seminars or tutorials (8 respondents) and/or through module documentation (3 respondents). The justification for this was manifold, and included materials being published after the reading list, supplementary seminar handouts

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Academic staff perceptions and use of reading lists for book ordering

beyond the reading list material, resources that dealt with news or current events that were integral materials for seminar debates and particular sources being cited to encourage students to undertake their own literature searches. Only one respondent was adamant that reading lists should be restricted to required reading only and maintained that additional material should only ever be given to those students who wished to pursue the historiography of a particular topic.

It was encouraging to observe that the majority of respondents (31) stated that they update their reading lists at least once a year, with 16 updating their lists when they identified new and/or relevant material. Perhaps less encouragingly for the research project, only 27 respondents notify their academic librarian of changes to their reading lists, either via email or by sending updated lists, or, indeed, by using the review function in Talis Aspire (Talis 2015). The remaining 19 (41.3%) stated that they did not inform their academic librarian of any changes. Such a high proportion of non-notifications would suggest that using the reading list as a resource procurement tool to improve and streamline the ordering process is not without its difficulties. In terms of the resources ordered and included on the reading list, all 46 respondents included books (44 said textbooks and 36 e-books), while 42 included journals and 32 included links to websites. The majority (37) stated that they themselves ordered new resources for the library and of them, 31 emailed their academic librarian with the items they wished to acquire. Only 7 respondents said they used Talis Aspire to order new materials.

Finally, 43 respondents provided further comments on their experience of ordering and/or accessing resources through LLS. The general consensus was that LLS offers a good service. However, a number of comments revealed both a lack of knowledge regarding the role of LLS in the ordering process and insufficient communication between LLS and the faculty in relation to the new materials ordered – e.g. when new orders become available, delays in obtaining individual orders, or the different formats in which particular resources are available for purchase. Newer faculty members expressed complete ignorance as to the ordering process or even how to go about ordering, and suggested that this should be made part of the induction process.

With regard to Talis Aspire and reading lists, the additional comments were mixed. There were positive assertions that the system works quite well, although as with the ordering process, induction sessions and drop-in training would be of benefit to faculty members who cannot make the set training sessions offered. These sessions, run by academic librarians, were viewed as 'very helpful' in supporting the construction of fully supportive reading lists for students on a first-year undergraduate module. Conversely, a number of issues with the system were highlighted, such as the lack of automatic updates for new editions of texts, duplication of administration time when faculty members are required to produce reading lists in other formats (in module guides for validations or on the virtual learning environment). One respondent noted how a reading list that was sent to the librarian for review set off a chain of events that entailed half the department's budget being spent on this reading list alone. The administration time factor in setting up and maintaining Talis Aspire reading lists was emphasised, the suggestion being that library staff should be responsible for creating and updating all module reading lists on the system.

Outcomes

The aim of this research project was to see how the LLS ordering processes could be enhanced by eliciting the academics' perspective and interrogating their practices. The survey conducted by the research team highlighted a number of issues for consideration. Firstly, as the pre-survey literature review demonstrated, and in accordance with similar research projects,

Academic staff perceptions and use of reading lists for book ordering

communication between faculty and library staff needs to be improved. Christiansen, Strombler and Thraxton (2004) have identified what they term an 'asymmetrical disconnection' (p. 18), a culture whereby while the librarians are fully aware of the academics' roles and responsibilities, while the academics tend to have little or no knowledge of the librarians' roles and responsibilities. Indeed, as the survey established, while longer-serving academics had some knowledge of LLS ordering processes, new academics were completely in the dark, even in relation to their own role in the process. Thus, the survey helped the research team to formulate specific questions tailored around reading lists, Talis Aspire and the ordering process, a workflow poster explaining the process from beginning to end, along with a number of suggestions to improve communication and alerts for academics; these were presented to a succession of focus groups that developed from the initial survey.

Secondly, further examination of engagement levels with Talis Aspire and reading lists as effective media for ordering new and relevant resources is needed. The reading list appeared to mean different things to different people. The number and types of resources for each individual module and subject area are diverse and variant, as is the approach to updating the lists and informing the librarians responsible. The question now is, it possible to have a uniform reading list model which would be more suited to LLS ordering processes? Academics are constrained by time, workload and insufficient training, which makes full engagement with Talis Aspire difficult or even impossible; setting up initial lists and maintaining existing lists is something that needs addressing on a university-wide basis. It is clear that this project, undertaken by the LLS research team, has opened up the potential for discussion about how to revise and enhance practices both in the University of Northampton and in the wider community of academic libraries.

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UCL Main & Science Libraries

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Introduction

As with any service organisation, libraries need to understand and engage with their customers in order to meet their needs or, indeed, surpass expectations. As an academic library service, UCL Library Services serves the mission of the university.

'The primary determinant of a truly exceptional student experience is the quality of the interaction between academic staff and students' (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-2034/key-enablers/students>).

This statement is an excerpt from UCL 2034, the institutional strategy outlining the 20-year vision for the university. This paper illustrates how UCL Library Services is developing the quality of interaction between library staff and users as the defining feature of an excellent user experience. One of UCL's objectives under the UCL 2034 Key Enabler entitled 'Giving our students the best support, facilities and opportunities' is to 'provide high-quality student services that... enable students to focus on their studies and so maximise... achievement'. The same Key Enabler prioritises 'use of technology to support learning, with a primary focus on students on campus'.

In response to UCL 2034, UCL Library Services launched a new Library Strategy for 2015–18, with objectives aligned to the priorities in the institutional strategy. Our first of six Key Performance Areas is focused on User Experience (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/about/strategy/ue>), with 'User' rather than 'Student' experience reflecting the diverse user base of UCL's eighteen libraries, which serve not only UCL staff and students but also NHS and external communities of users. As part of our commitment to improving our services, we are rolling out RFID self-service across all libraries at UCL by October 2016. This in turn is releasing staff time formerly devoted to circulation transactions and enabling a transformation of our staffed services towards more customer-focused high-quality interactions.

Over the past few years there has been a change in student expectation and a need for academic libraries to provide value for money: 'This is becoming ever more important in a market place increasingly driven by fees, graduate contributions and the rising expectations that come with higher payments and student debt' (Young, 2011). At UCL, we have seen the need to change our customer focus, recognising that customers expect immediate answers to their enquiries; it has become clear that a 'one-stop shop' approach would be beneficial. In addition, UCL has an expanding global community that has an expectation of service that matches the best libraries from across the world. We have therefore developed a way of working that adopts the philosophy of 'serving the customer at the point of need'.

In 2014, UCL Library Services embarked on an ambitious three-year plan to install self-service in all libraries, replicating the equipment installed in the Science Library and Eastman Dental Library in 2009. Included in this initial phase was the UCL Main Library, one of the largest in the UCL family of libraries, and open 24 hours on weekdays, with over 5,000 visits per day at peak times of year. Before the self-service installation in the Main Library, customer services centred around a five-seat issue desk, with restrictive barriers and a queuing system. Staff spent large amounts of time stamping items in and out, which left little time or freedom for them to help customers where and when necessary and not enough opportunity to use their skills and knowledge to the full. The installation of self-service in the Main Library acted as a catalyst for reviewing the way we interacted with customers.

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UCL Main & Science Libraries

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UCL Main Library: from a traditional issue desk to the 'meerkat approach'

During the summer of 2014, the Main Library issue desk space was replaced by three self-issue machines, a number of multifunctional devices (MFDs) enabling customers to print, copy and scan, a self-service collection point for reserved items and a separate self-service short loan collection. An automated returns unit in a separate room was also installed, with items sorted into material ready for shelving and exceptions. The team no longer had an issue desk and instead had two service points where customer queries could be dealt with. A project ensued to work out how to use the new space, focusing on staff responsibilities now that customers were able to carry out basic transactions by themselves. The work carried out was a genuine collaboration between managers and the team of assistants to determine new roles and working practices.

The team would still need to carry out advanced circulation enquiries, financial transactions, account queries, and the usual administrative tasks such as invoicing, missing books and claimed returns. However, they now had the opportunity to deal with more in-depth enquiries, troubleshooting MFD and laptop loan queries, location of material in the library, and 'anything else' that arose. The concept of answering enquiries on 'anything else' is important as staff now had the time and freedom to deal with any enquiry that came their way.



New Main Library Help Point

The team worked on customer journey mapping to see how customers naturally used the space, how they gravitated to different services available and what happened when they needed help from the team. Time was spent observing how the space was used at different times of day. Managers also spent time as prospective customers, finding natural pathways around the new furniture and facilities. This enabled the team to judge the best positions for staff to be visible and to ensure that they are always on hand to answer queries, without the customer having to search for help. From this observation and analysis, five new team roles were established (see below). Roles were

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numbered in order to distinguish them from one another, and to help create a clear rota.

Description of roles

Role one consisted of staff adopting a 'floating' approach, using one of the service points as a base, but effectively standing in the refurbished self-service area, looking out for customers and being on hand to help. Staff were also free to bring customers back to the service point to look up account information, take them to the office for any financial transactions, or help with MFDs, laptop loans or using Explore (online catalogues). In the Grade-1-listed Wilkins building, which hosts the Main Library, there used to be a risk that customers would fail to find their what they were looking for and walk away. Staff now have time to accompany them to different sections of the library to find material or subject librarians.

Role two was at the service point; the staff member was seated on a high stool, which gave them the advantageous position of being able to view the entire area, looking out for customers who may need help. This was a seated role to avoid team members having to stand for too long; however, it wasn't static, as it acted as a back-up for role one. The phrase 'meerkat approach' was adopted because the team make sure they look up every few seconds to keep an eye out for customers in need of help.

Role three was based in the self-service returns room, and was a predominantly administrative role. A new staff work-station was set up, which meant that this team member could also help customers with returns. Help was thus available over a larger physical area, rather than just at an issue desk.

Role four was based in the supervisor's office adjacent to the main self-service area. This is mainly used for carrying out any administrative tasks, including invoicing, answering email enquiries and social media updates.

Role five was assigned as a roving role, away from the self-service area, but in the near vicinity, identifying customers who have directional enquiries, without their having to look for a staff member. This role was trialled throughout the library but was found to be most effective if team members stayed near the library entrance and the Flaxman Gallery, which usually has the largest concentration of students gathering at any one time. Again, this role was flexible in that team members were free to accompany customers to other parts of the library, but could also support other roles.

In order to refine these roles and iron out any teething problems, a series of trial days involving all team members and managers was held between January and May 2015. All team members were given the opportunity to trial roles, and feedback was encouraged via email, in one-to-one meetings and in group sessions.

It was clear from the first trial day that role two needed to have the option of being seated. If a team member was on the rota for role one and two consecutively, it was too exhausting at busy times not to have a seated period. We found that even though the roles can be flexible in the way they support each other, we still needed a rota to make clear where staff were to be based, and to make sure all got the opportunity to undertake a variety of roles. A rota was also needed in order to plan for annual leave and contingencies. It was useful in effecting the transition from the rigid style of working at an issue desk to a more flexible approach.

Data protection was an important consideration, with customers free to roam behind the service points in an open-plan self-service area. It was decided that confidential transactions and payments would take place away from the service

points. The staff administration office next to the service points has been converted into a shared staff and user space. In order to create this space, we are in the process of redesigning the office to make it an appropriate staff work space, where customer transactions can also be dealt with. This reflects the practice that many businesses such as banks have adopted, where staff triage enquiries and take customers into a confidential space when necessary. This is a new way of working in UCL Library Services.

The series of trial days has recently come to an end for the time being, with roles and the culture of serving customers at the point of need established. The trial and feedback process has been integral to this project so that staff not only feel involved but also 'buy in' to the change. We found it essential to run this as a collaborative project as library assistants know their customers better than managers do and consequently are often more creative in their response to customer need.

UCL Science Library: empowering staff to deliver outstanding service

While the work was being carried out in the Main Library the team started to look at the service areas in the Science Library. Self-service had been installed in the Science Library a few years earlier as part of a redevelopment of the ground floor into an IT-enabled social learning space called the Learning Lab. A satellite service point had been installed in the Learning Lab area, where the self-service facilities, MFDs and short loan collection were situated. This service point was underused, but in conjunction with the customer service work in the Main Library, the Science Library team started to look at how the service points could be better used to help customers beyond the issue desk. The journey mapping of customers in the Science Library found that they would always encounter the Learning Lab area first, and if they needed help, team members at the issue desk were difficult to find, behind a set of double doors. Clearly this way of working was contrary to serving the customer at the point of need. The set-up was changed so more staff were out in the Learning Lab, and the service point was used to triage customer enquiries, customers only going through to the issue desk area if they needed to collect inter-library loans or stores items, had to make financial transactions or had confidential account queries. This has had the effect of basing staff where the customers and facilities are, and enabling customers to find help when and where they need it, thus implementing a 'one-stop shop' approach.

Given these changes at the Main and Science libraries, service points and issue desks were re-named as 'help points', and new signage will be introduced in the near future. The change has made it easier for customers to know exactly where to look for help, rather than trying to decipher library terminology such as issue desk and service point.

The evening and Saturday teams have recently changed their work patterns and adopted the new roles in the Main Library, and they use the Learning Lab help point in the Science Library. The Head of Evening and Weekend services devised rotas for staffing these areas; this has been challenging as the number of staff is reduced after 17:00 during the week and on Saturdays. However, it was necessary to develop a consistent level of service at all times. (The evening and Saturday teams were formerly known as 'out-of-hours' staff, but are now called 'evening & Saturday teams' to de-construct the sense that service at these times is extraordinary.) To help make this change, the Head of evening and Weekend services was involved in the daytime trials, and daytime assistants were invited to talk to evening and Saturday staff about serving the customer at the point of need.

To help equip staff with the skills needed to deal with any type of customer enquiry, whether at a help point or in other parts of the library, we have introduced a number of training methods in addition to the usual refresher

and on-the-job training. From 09:00 till 10:00 on Fridays is set aside for staff training every week of the year. These sessions are invaluable for group training, and focus on refreshing skills, learning about new developments in the library, and for holding the monthly library Journal Club. This was started over a year ago to increase staff awareness of the wider academic library landscape and to discuss articles written about aspects of customer service, with a view to shaping the way we serve customers in the Main and Science libraries. Academic articles have recently focused on feedback, evaluation, the concept of charging fines, and serving customers. They have been very useful in illustrating and giving academic depth to new and innovative ideas, making the transition in customer service easier for the whole team. Team managers have recently introduced a self-directed learning tool called 'Ten things to do at the Help Point'. There are ten different tasks every two weeks, sent out to the whole team, with a view to up-skilling staff and reaching members of the team who can't attend Friday training. It also gives team members activities at the help points during quiet times. The tasks include refresher training on aspects of the library management system, reading Journal Club articles, and a research topic. Each member of staff has a space on the shared drive where they can mark what activities they have managed to complete and make any comments on research topics for managers. Whilst individuals are under no pressure to complete all ten tasks as customers always come first, it gives managers valuable information for completing skills audits and training needs analysis. It has also increased staff confidence in answering any enquiry.

Future plans

Our ambition is broadly set out in the Library Strategy 2015–18 as we start working towards the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. Further work is being carried out on creating a customer services mission statement to focus staff on team goals and to inform customers clearly how we can best serve them. But importantly, despite UCL Library Services having over 300 staff, the change was not dictated: it was developed and evolved by the teams responsible for front-line services locally. Training schemes have enabled a growing awareness of the literature and best practice to combine with the teams' existing extensive knowledge of serving library users. In order to deliver a truly outstanding user experience it is essential to make use of the expertise and experience of library staff and their knowledge of users. The concept of share staff–student spaces will be realised through the refurbishment of the administration office in the Main Library and thus we hope to break down the barriers of traditional issue desks.

By implementing this new way of working we have helped to establish the libraries as supportive environments. It is important for students to know that the library is a safe place to study and that they can get help whenever and wherever they need, given that for some it is the first time they have lived away from home, lived in London or in a foreign country. We now have time to spend with the individual whether they need help finding library resources, directions around campus, or where they can find the best cup of tea! This cohesive one-stop concept of customer service reflects what already happens at some smaller libraries in UCL, where staff have always had more freedom to help customers at the point of need. Through this project we have managed to adopt their good practice and replicate it with larger teams of staff, library space and customer numbers, creating a more personalised, individual and consistent service across UCL.

This project has been challenging at times, but the outcome shows that installing self-service can enable radical service improvement when it is embraced as a tool for user experience improvement rather than cost-cutting. We see customer service as a constantly changing environment, where approaches need to be challenged, revised and updated in order to provide the best service possible. We have started to collate regular feedback from

UCL Main & Science Libraries

Serving customers
at the point of
need

customers, using updated suggestions forms, and feedback questions and answers have been made publicly available for the first time within these teams. We are working on creating a customer charter to inform customers about how we can help them. And whilst there is much talk of the importance of getting to know our customers and gaining insights from surveys, it is important to recognise the value of our customers knowing our staff. Excellent user experiences occur where both users and library staff can find opportunity, support and encouragement. UCL Library Services recognises the value of staff and our second key performance area based on 'Staffing Equality and Diversity' addresses those challenges and opportunities. In practice, the UCL model of shared staff–student space will showcase this approach, which focuses holistically on the user experience.

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Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students

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University of the Arts London (UAL) is a specialist provider of art, design, fashion, communication and performance education from Foundation through to PhD level. It is made up of six colleges: Camberwell College of Arts; Central Saint Martins; Chelsea College of Arts; London College of Communication; London College of Fashion; Wimbledon College of Arts. The student population is circa 19,000 and approximately half our students come from overseas. Currently 74% study at undergraduate level, 14% at postgraduate level and 12% at further education level.

Historically, academic support was primarily provided by study support teams that were located in the colleges. They operated independently of each other and there were huge differences in resourcing levels. Inevitably the support provided was varied, and much of it necessarily focused on dyslexia support because of the high incidence of dyslexia amongst creative arts students.¹ Library Services, the Language Centre and Student Services also offered other aspects of academic support nuanced to reflect their specific roles, but largely delivered in isolation from any other academic support.

In 2011 - 12 a review of this provision was undertaken in order to

- develop a clearly articulated and shared vision for academic support, including the provision of study skills support, information and digital literacy, and English language support;
- outline a university-wide offer that specifies the core entitlement for academic support and ensures parity of provision to all students;
- determine the structure and funding for the delivery of academic support.

The review included extensive consultations with staff and students through one-to-one interviews and focus groups, as well as an analysis of feedback gleaned from recent student surveys, annual monitoring and quality review reports. It highlighted that those students who had accessed academic support generally had a very positive experience. However, it also revealed traits in students' perception of academic support that gave cause for concern, as many had little or no awareness of the provision or presumed that it was aimed only at students with dyslexia or those at risk of failure. In particular, international students expressed a resistance to take up academic support as they were anxious about being associated with a deficit model of support. Teaching and technical staff had varying levels of knowledge about the academic support provision, which impacted on their ability to refer students in a timely and appropriate manner. Consequently it became clear that many students were missing out on this opportunity to enhance their learning.

The review considered best practice across the sector and the latest research on academic support, as well as recent changes in higher education policy and current debates about the student experience, including those focused on transitioning and induction, retention and attainment, employability and enterprise, inclusivity and globalisation. In addition, the review considered the future of art and design teaching in the school curriculum and the growing importance of the creative industries for the UK economy.

The findings of the review endorsed much of existing UAL practice and also led to a number of recommendations to address perceived weaknesses in provision and to create added value. These were endorsed by both the university's Academic Board and the Executive Board in summer 2012, and included

- institutional-level leadership and co-ordination through the Director of Libraries and Academic Support Services and the creation of a new post, Associate Dean of Academic Support, plus the development of a governance structure to facilitate greater collaboration between study

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Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students

support, language support and library support teams;

- implementation of consistent structures and staffing levels across the colleges to ensure parity in provision, plus the creation of a small central team to develop a university-wide offer;
- development of an institutional strategy underpinned by a shared vision and set of core principles advocating the support and development of all students to fulfil their academic potential, and the promotion of academic support as an enhancement rather than a deficit activity;
- creation of a multi-faceted offer that combines subject specific / embedded support and semi-integrated support delivered in the colleges with a new generic / freestanding offer open to all students across the university;
- development of online, multi-media and print materials as a shared resource bank freely available to all students to complement face-to-face support;
- utilisation of libraries and learning zones for academic support activities and for promotional materials as part of a seamless, high-profile and accessible provision;
- transfer of specialist dyslexia support to the University Disability Service.

Appropriate funding was secured and a new organisational structure was put in place as the first priority. Parallel to this, work commenced in a consultative way on the development of the *Strategy for academic support 2013 - 2016*² that was endorsed by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board in summer 2013. The new strategy now underpins all that we do and acts as our institutional roadmap for developing academic support. The Strategy's overarching vision is

'to enable all students to become confident and competent independent learners, and achieve to the maximum of their potential through the development of their academic skills, literacies and professional attributes.'

During 2013 - 14 activity focused on four main areas: governance, including the development of a meeting structure to facilitate the sharing of good practice and greater co-ordination across teams; communications and marketing to increase the visibility and to clarify the identity of academic support for staff and students; developmental work to achieve a multi-faceted offer that would address the specific needs of UAL and our creative arts context.

The new university-wide freestanding programme of events was launched in February 2014 to complement the well-established activities delivered within the colleges. This distinctive offer seeks to enhance the student's *'own learning abilities, strategies and knowledges that underpin progress, achievement and future success'* in an anticipatory and innovative manner. Sessions are often co-created and co-delivered under the guidance of the Academic Support Co-ordinator so that students benefit from the differing expertise of the staff involved. This is an additional great way of bringing together study support lecturers, librarians and language tutors to create a coherent and collaborative provision. Different approaches are adopted according to the purpose of each session and the preferred learning styles of creative arts students. Students have responded particularly well to: object-based learning³ as a technique to develop their research skills and to explore themes such as cultural identity through archives and special collections; Lego® Serious Play® (LSP)⁴ as a methodology to help students with 'stuckness' and as a means to explore the relationship between interests, identities and values; the use of Ketso® kits⁵ as a tool for group reflection on collaborative practice.

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Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students



Object-based learning
Photo: Graham Barton



Ketso® kit
Photo: Graham Barton

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Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students



Lego Serious Play
Photo: Graham Barton

Most of the sessions are open to any student through an online booking system, and although attendance levels vary, with some sessions being fully booked and others attracting lower numbers, students from all six colleges have attended sessions regardless of geographical location. In fact many of them have stated that one of the things they value about this offer is the opportunity to meet up with students from other disciplines and from other colleges.

We always seek student feedback and are particularly monitoring the following indicators to evaluate the offer: changes in behavioural intention; changes in viewpoint or perspective on discipline; new learning / ideas / sensitivities triggered; increasing self-awareness; understandings of cultural / disciplinary difference. The following is a sample from recent feedback:

'Every way / suggestion of how to manage stuckness was helpful. Some of them are known things but we don't realize if someone don't say it to you.' (about a session on stuckness)

'How different people have really different perspectives on the same object.' (about an object-based learning session)

'I think this kind of workshop just opens my mind and I still need to keep thinking.' (about an object-based learning session)

'Yes, try not to think about the question first. Just start to build something and I will find a solution from the process - learning by playing!' (about Lego® Serious Play® as a methodology)

We are in our second year of the programme of workshops and continue to experiment with different topics and approaches, continually remodelling the programme to reflect student feedback and to respond to requests from academic colleagues. Recently we have added sessions on: thinking through drawing; thinking through moving image; researching skilfully through artists' books and multiples; exploring flow (using 3-dimensional printing pen technology).

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Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students



Learning through drawing
Photo: Graham Barton

The major priority for 2014 - 15 has been the development of a new web-based tool, Academic Support Online. This will be a community-based website for engagement with the debates and skills surrounding learning development at UAL through which both staff and students can contribute content and provide commentary. It will have a direct relationship with the freestanding offer noted above but also link with academic support provided in colleges and by other services, such as Library Services and the Language Centre. Many of the online resources in its knowledge bank will be generated within the university, hence they will be tailor-made for a creative arts community, and links will be provided to the vast array of high-quality resources freely available via the web. It will also offer a booking option for academic support events. To date, Academic Support Online has proved to be an immensely challenging project, but phase one of the knowledge bank is on schedule to be launched in summer 2015. We shall then develop further phases in an agile manner with students and staff being consulted on the design and functionality of the site at every stage.

Other developments currently under way include focused work on pre-arrival and induction support in order to enhance this academic support and thus aid students transitioning into the university. One college has experimented with crowd-sourcing amongst students pre-arrival through the use of blogging in order to promote student engagement and to instil a sense of community prior to arrival. Student-generated induction as advocated by Nicholas Bowskill⁶ has also been piloted in an effort to move away from induction through information transmission to induction through co-construction with students. Additionally, special welcome events have been organised for overseas students to aid their integration into the academic and cultural life at UAL and to create a greater sense of 'belonging' from the outset. Future priorities include: targeted support at known crisis points to support retention and attainment; expansion of peer support and peer mentoring schemes; more work on multicultural awareness and valuing diversity amongst both staff and students as part of our commitment to inclusive practices. We also want to build our research capacity and publishing activity on topics associated with academic support, thus contributing to the wider learning development community.

In conclusion, it is three years since the original review, so it seems timely to make some personal reflections. The process of writing this article has highlighted just how much has been achieved in a reasonably short time as

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Re-visioning academic support as an innovative and inclusive offer for creative arts students

most of the recommendations arising from the review have been implemented, although inevitably some things have proved harder to progress than others. There is definitely a strong collective commitment amongst the staff to support students in their academic endeavours and there are many examples of very effective collaborations between study support lecturers, language tutors, librarians and archivists; these have undoubtedly enhanced the student and staff experience. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and statistics suggest that academic support is benefitting a more diverse student community than before. However, one area that requires a lot more work is evaluating the impact of these interventions. This is notoriously difficult but we are hoping to dovetail this work with a wider review of quality processes at UAL that will go beyond standard data gathering and monitoring of activity and take us further into the territory of quality enhancement and learning analytics.

Undoubtedly the biggest gain of all has been the fact that the profile of academic support has changed radically within the institution, and the strategic importance of this activity is now acknowledged at course, college and university level. This endorsement provides an excellent context for further developments as we are still only part way through our journey to making academic support at UAL an exemplar offer which both supports and enriches students' academic experiences regardless of their level of study and discipline, mode of attendance, social and cultural background.

For more information on the provision please see *About academic support*.⁷

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In-depth induction for our international students using a board game



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Introduction

Newcastle University is a Russell Group institution based in North East England with a current student body of 21,000. The university also has a campus in Singapore, whose students study in the faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering (SAGe). Each summer undergraduate students who have completed their first year in Singapore visit the Newcastle campus to take part in the Overseas Immersion Programme (OIP), which includes lectures, assignments and visits to different parts of the university and the region as well as cultural and sporting activities. The aim is to give students an affinity with the university and the city of Newcastle as well as developing their academic and study skills.

The Robinson Library plays an active role in this immersion programme and the students spend a whole day with us developing their information and digital literacy skills. This article describes how the SAGe Liaison Team developed a new blended, themed programme using face-to-face activities and online content in a virtual learning environment.

Design and development of the programme

The internationalisation of higher education has had an impact on the modes of course delivery and the technologies that UK universities offer their students as discussed by educators and academics alike (Weller, 2003; Brindley, 2012). Supporting our students based in overseas campuses is an important part of the work of the library service at Newcastle University and we adapt our services and the technologies we use to meet their needs. One of the aims of our OIP induction is to make an impact and develop a relationship with students when they arrive for their library induction. We also want to make it clear that we are here to support them when they return to Singapore.

The SAGe liaison team decided to develop a board game for the 2014 programme as we are aware that such games are popular in Singapore, and it was hoped that there would thus be an element of fun and competitiveness to the activities. Many online and blended approaches to teaching are based on the constructivist approach to learning developed by theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Duffy and Jonassen (Conole *et al.*, 2004). This is based on the theory that learning happens through an individual's experience as well as through their interaction with the environment and with others. Rather than a passive approach to learning, which existed in educational institutions for many centuries, the constructivist approach also relies on the active element of the process to contribute to the storage of information in the long-term memory. The 'blended' aspect of this programme involved a combination of lectures, group work and self-guided activities around the library. We wanted to create a more effective programme based around social constructivism (Fosnot, 2005; Allen, 2008; So & Brush, 2008) with a mixture of collaborative and online learning. The students are working on assignments when they visit the library so they can immediately apply new skills to their assignment topics.

A printed handbook was developed using the board game theme, each library skill being represented by a different coloured game card. Students were required to do a number of different activities, e.g. finding a resource on the library search catalogue and writing down what they had found. A number of colour-coded 'stations' were set up around the library and students were asked to visit them to collect additional handouts, freebies or sweets. In their group activities students were asked to choose a group name, and prizes were awarded for the most original and fun names.

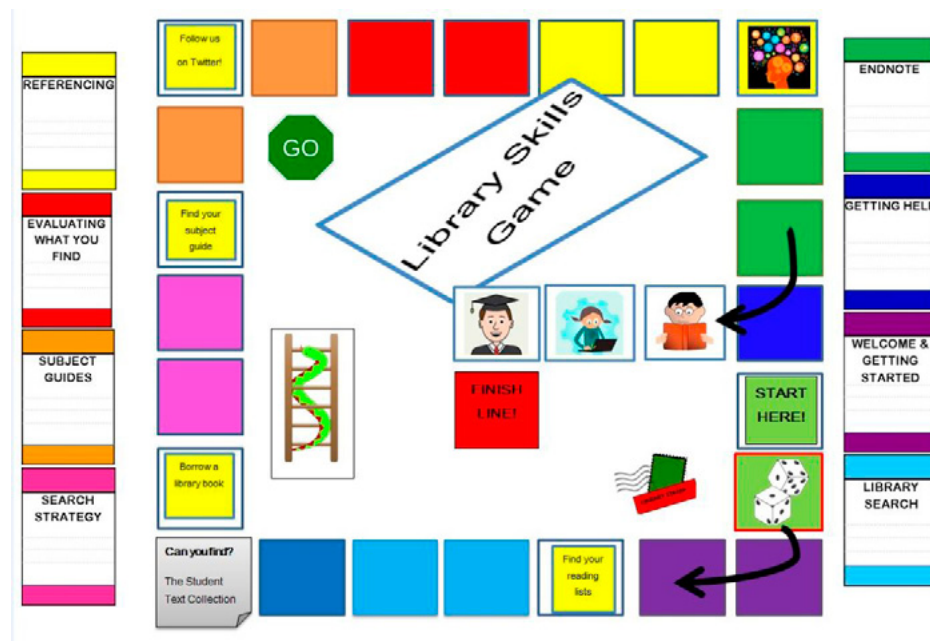
The Singapore students have access to a Blackboard (virtual learning environment) community and the library had previously developed content in this space. The use of virtual learning environments to support information literacy teaching is common practice in higher education both for assessed

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In-depth induction for our international students using a board game

programmes and as a self-directed learning resource (Pastula, 2010; Ladell-Thomas, 2012). The content already in place in Blackboard was quite outdated and needed to be reviewed and refreshed. So this was done in line with the themes of the face-to-face workshops (library search / subject guides / search strategy / evaluating resources / referencing / EndNote). Additional information about how to get help and support when off campus and how to keep up to date using social media was also provided.



The board game theme was transferred into Blackboard with different colour-coded activities for each of elements of library induction. These activities included audio-visual material (e.g. Camtasia video introduction to e-books) and games (e.g. a drag-and-drop board game created with Xerte software).

An online assessment is always included in the OIP library programme. This used to be marked manually by library staff, so it was updated in Blackboard so that it could be automatically marked using the Grade Centre. Prizes were given for the highest scores in the test.

Why did we do it?

The overriding aim of the programme was to create a fun and relaxed environment for students to learn about the library and research skills while they are on campus. However, we also wanted to provide a step-by-step online course for students to access when they return home, either to complete from start to finish, or to dip in and out of, depending on their information needs. We saw the benefits as:

- providing off campus resources for Newcastle University International Singapore students when they return home
- making them feel confident about asking for help when they return to Singapore
- linking face-to-face OIP activities with Blackboard content
- using Blackboard grade centre assessment and saving staff time in marking work
- ability to reuse assessments and learning objects

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In-depth induction for our international students using a board game

Conclusion

Students' feedback on the library element of the programme indicated that they found it both fun and interactive. Library sessions were seen by 83% as well structured and enjoyable. The average score in the online Blackboard assessment was 134 out of a possible 200 marks. The lowest scores were for questions relating to the use of operators and truncation when searching for information on the Internet and in databases. Based on the responses to one question, over 40% of the students thought that online databases were freely available to all.

Overall the programme was a success. We are now planning the 2015 programme, using the same format while reviewing and updating the content to keep it fresh. Having a parallel theme for the face-to-face delivery and online content helped to bring both parts of the programme together while also providing access to research skills guidance and help when the students returned home after their visit.

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Building and convening an international advisory board for the library and academic technology in a startup university

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Introduction

New York University (NYU) Shanghai is the first Sino-US higher education joint venture university in the People's Republic of China. As part of the Global Network University in New York University, NYU Shanghai is an important portal campus for NYU students who wish to study in China. It opened in fall of 2013 with approximately 300 freshmen: 150 are international students from the USA, Canada, Europe, India, Mexico, etc., while the others are from various parts of China. This hybrid student body makes the university a very diverse community.

In fall 2014, the university enrolled a further 150 international and 150 Chinese national students. The academic technology and library advisory board, known as ATLAB, was formed to address the concerns of students, faculty and staff regarding library or academic technology services. From fall 2014 to spring 2015, ATLAB met three times per semester. The article will describe the role of ATLAB in identifying the needs of international students by looking at discussions held during meetings. It will also present some strategies for starting and managing an academic advisory board.

First meeting: from ideas into actions

Initially the group consisted of two students, two faculty members, a staff member from the academic technology services, a librarian, and a staff member from the academic resource center, which offers tutoring services for students in writing, math and other subjects. The group met once a month to discuss library or academic technology matters, policies, services and resources. As it was very new, other librarians and library staff attended the meetings occasionally, and were viewed as 'guests' at the ATLAB group.

At the first meeting, students discussed concerns about the temperature in the library and about how the library tended to get full. Other members raised questions about student rooms available outside the library, and we all wanted to find out how students can book them for study purposes. At the next meeting members shared their findings with the group: i.e. that students can book rooms outside the library; they were encouraged to inform their peers of this. The library contacted facilities services and arranged for the temperature to be adjusted.

One of the most important topics in the ATLAB meeting was the library's opening hours. The faculty, including the students, wanted to know why the library only opened from Monday to Friday. On being informed that the library did not have enough staff to provide weekend services, they suggested an extension to opening hours during the week to accommodate those who attend classes that run into the evening. The librarian discussed this with the library team and a month later, evening opening started. It was helpful for planning future weekend workshops and events to learn that students study in the library on Sundays, but not on Saturdays. One of the great advantages of working in a new startup university is there is the opportunity to roll out new services and policies in the most efficient way possible. Having this advisory board allowed the library to make decisions that expanded its services to accommodate all users.

Representatives of ATLAB asked the academic technology services, which operate at the other side of the building, about new equipment loans, policies and services. In later meetings, the staff member from this academic technology services addressed concerns about e-book services, programs and other resources on campus.

Library workshops and how they would be scheduled was an important discussion topic. The faculty supported these initiatives and gave input on their development. The representative of the academic resource center offered collaboration in the facilitation of these programs. Students commented

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Building and convening an international advisory board for the library and academic technology in a startup university

that it could be difficult to attend, given their heavy work schedules, and the importance of timetabling workshops in the evenings or late afternoons was recognized. We discussed teaching some workshops in Chinese-Mandarin since there are approximately six hundred Chinese students in our university. As they may not be familiar with all the concepts of intellectual property, scholarly research, plagiarism and citation management tools, we felt it may be useful to hold a session or two in Chinese for them. However, the faculty emphasized the importance of students being immersed in the academic culture through the medium of English, since it is the official language of the school. The library therefore decided to offer workshops only in English.

We discussed how to promote these programs. The librarian talked about some of the library outreach tools in social media: Facebook and WeChat. Facebook can be used to disseminate information. The university has access to such a social media network in China through a virtual private network. WeChat is popular in China, with over 300 million followers; it allows users to send texts, video or voice messages and images and updates to users and group. Most if not all students in NYU Shanghai use it since it is free and simple to use. The library maintains a WeChat page to promote events. Our student representatives have let others know about this since it is the simplest and quickest way to communicate.

The last topic was about university events and programs. Since NYU Shanghai is a very new university, many programs and events are organized hastily. It was important to hear which events the student representatives knew about and which were popular or disorganized. They mentioned that there would be a 'hackathon' event at NYU Shanghai, where teams of students collaborate to create a piece of programming software, application or device. About 250 people had signed up for this event, which was open to outsiders. We decided to re-schedule our own programs to avoid clashes.

Post-first meeting: from discussion to policy

After the first meeting, the library convened and discussed several matters such as hours of service, facilities, room reservations, public services, library instruction, and upcoming university programs. Having a focus-group-like advisory board branded the library as an important service provider that is concerned with customer needs.

In the next five meetings, ATLAB played a major role in discussing the university's e-books and students' difficulties in accessing them. It was agreed that the academic technology services team would support students in handling their inquiries with the library. Student representatives shared their peers' concerns about using e-books and some faculty also mentioned how difficult it was for them to access them, to take notes or to read. As a result we created resource guides such as free note-taking apps and programs and e-book workshops.

The discussions opened the members' eyes to the fact that ATLAB works through collaboration, open dialogue and communication and synergy. We received support from the academic resource center to present these opportunities to students in their workshop sessions and tutoring services. Our meetings were brief and productive, and members knew what to do next and how to support the library and academic technology services. By having a diverse group of members, the library and academic technology services benefit from their voices and support; we learned how to plan and strategize better to accommodate all user needs.

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Building and convening an international advisory board for the library and academic technology in a startup university

Strategies for organizing or convening an advisory board

The first important role for convening an advisory board is scheduling. Members will have very varied weekly schedules, so it is best to communicate with them well in advance to suggest possible times, dates and venues. One possibility is to create a 'doodle' page using the free online scheduling tool, doodle.com.

It is important to nominate someone to take minutes, or agree to rotate the role minute-taker. For ATLAB the convener took most of the minutes and sent them to all the members. The minutes were deposited into a wiki page – a central resource portal for the library staff and helpful for anyone who missed a meeting or joins the board later on.

The end of each semester's final meeting provides an opportunity for some members to step down and for new members to join. Our international students in NYU Shanghai have been eager to serve on this board because they feel that they want to support the services and resources coming from the library and academic technology, and they can put their volunteering services into their resumé or curriculum vitae.

Conclusion

Convening a new advisory board as a sounding board or focus group of students, faculty and staff is an important way of getting to know more about customers; the meetings and discussions can offer helpful guidance, synergies and ideas to support, enhance or brand your library. We find that having students on the board is an effective way to get to know and respond to their needs. Their inputs and contributions are valued and they can be advocates in promoting upcoming services or resources. It is ultimately up to the convener to manage discussions and address any concerns coming from the group. Having an advisory board presents numerous opportunities to build relationships with these patrons and to enhance services and policies that are reflective of their needs.

The library at NYU Shanghai certainly benefited from these monthly exchanges where faculty and librarians developed new ideas for mutual collaboration and support; academic technology staff and students were able to address the issues of e-book services for international students. Most importantly, the discussions were the joint effort of students, faculty, librarians and staff who serve the needs of the academic community.

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Literature searching for research students: meeting the needs of a diverse student population

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Background

De Montfort University is gradually increasing its research base and currently has around 700 students studying research degrees. Traditionally, PhD training has been face-to-face, with the library providing a mandatory day-long session introducing literature searching and reference management. However, a growing number of students are now mainly based overseas and many UK PhD students will not necessarily be local to the city. An initiative was therefore put in place to convert all face-to-face courses to online to create a virtual graduate school training programme.

Developing a blended learning approach

When developing the library's literature searching online course, we looked at feedback from the previous face-to-face sessions which had been consistently good. Two of the key reasons why students liked the sessions were due to the opportunity to meet with other PhD students, and the opportunity to try out their searches with a subject librarian on hand to offer them advice and support.

With this feedback in mind, we decided against creating a completely online course and instead moved towards a more blended approach. The new course enables all students to complete the first three units online, which cover: an introduction to literature searching and how this fits into the literature review process; how to identify keywords; and how to identify appropriate sources. The advantage of covering some of the basics this way is that students can work at their own pace. One of the challenges of working with PhD students is the very different experiences they can have before starting their PhD. They may have worked their way through the UK higher education system and therefore be broadly familiar with the basics of literature searching, or have very little experience in this area.

At the end of unit 3, the students can choose to attend a face-to-face session where advanced searching (including citation searching) and current awareness is covered. In theory, students should then be broadly at the same level having completed activities to get to grips with the basics of literature searching. This enables the face-to-face session to become more efficient and to be able to deal with specific issues and questions that may arise.

The first activity within the session asks students to talk in groups about the challenges that they have faced or expect to face when undertaking the literature review part of their work. These challenges are then collected on post-its and categorized, and the facilitators of the session can then recap or expand on material that may have been contained within the online part of the course, or move on to more advanced queries. Although the content of the session has been developed in advance, the session can be fluid, allowing concentration on the challenges identified by the students. This activity enables students to talk to their peers and to realise that they share many of the same challenges, whatever discipline they were working in. Hands-on practice occupies a large part of the session with 1:1 support available from the facilitators. If students are based at a distance or prefer the online mode of delivery, they can instead choose to follow the final two units online rather than attend face to face.

Creating a dialogue with students

After completing the first 3 units online, students are asked to produce a summary reflecting on what they have learnt and how they will apply the skills to their own topic and situation. The summary asks them to:

- develop the key concepts of their topic
- identify keywords and synonyms

Literature searching for research students: meeting the needs of a diverse student population

- understand how to combine keywords using Boolean operators
- discuss the types of resources that will be useful to their research
- reflect on the sources that they will use to search for information
- consider constraints or barriers they may experience during the process.

A copy of the reflective form is uploaded within the online course created in Blackboard and the relevant subject librarian then reviews the reflective piece and provides feedback to the students. This may be simply in the form of an email suggesting different keywords or sources that might be useful to them, or inviting the student to come to a 1:1 if they appear to be struggling with the concepts of literature searching. Providing contact in this proactive way enables students to know who their subject librarian is and where they can go for help, and can help to pick up potential problems with a student's work at an early stage. For the subject librarian, reviewing these reflective pieces enables a picture to be built up of the research topics taking place in a discipline area and provides the opportunity to make contact and build a relationship with PhD students.

Analysing feedback

A feedback form has to be completed by students to enable them to complete the course, whether this is by the blended or online only approach. Since introducing the blended course, feedback has been consistently good. Interestingly, most students opt to do the blended learning approach, rather than online only, again citing the opportunity to meet and share practice with their peers as the reason for choosing this format. Those who preferred to carry out the course online only, cited the fact that they lived away from the campus and could complete the course at their own convenience. Most of the students who completed the course online enjoyed the fact that material was short and included videos and screencasts, rather than having lengthy documents to read. However, all information is also produced in a textual format for those preferring a different style of learning.

Future developments

Developments to consider in the future will concentrate around some of the technical issues that have been experienced with Blackboard and continuing to develop more interactive elements within the online material. For those completing the course online only, we are looking at ways that we can try to recreate the peer support environment that is viewed so positively in the face-to-face session, for example: creating virtual post-it note pin boards; introducing discussion boards; using webinars to deliver live and recorded presentations and demonstrations, and utilising Skype or other software to provide 1:1 support with students at a distance.

Conclusion

Creating a blended approach to literature searching support for PhD students appears to meet the differing needs of students. There can be obstacles with technology, the challenge of getting the right tone for an online course aimed at researchers, and the difficulty of recreating the peer support and community element of a face-to-face course. However, a blended approach can help to bring all students to a basic level to then more easily facilitate the teaching of advanced skills. It also still allows for peer to peer support and community building, whilst enabling students at a distance to obtain the same information as their campus based peers. Creating a dialogue with students through the use of the reflective piece of work can also help librarians to build up a picture of research in their discipline areas which can be utilised in the development of appropriate services for researchers.

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Sustainability Library project: BA Spatial Design students and library staff

London College of Communication Library, University of the Arts London

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In January 2014 the first-year students on the BA spatial design course at London College of Communication (LCC) were set a brief to redesign an area of the college library for the 2014–15 academic year. The project was to be a collaboration involving the library team, the academic staff of the spatial design course and the students. The result is a space that highlights the theme of sustainability, and is colourful, comfortable and welcoming.

The specifics of the design brief were to redesign an area of the library's group-working area in its Learning Zone into a Sustainability Library, which would demonstrate eco-awareness and include a 'mobile library' unit (referred to as the MoLib) within it. The intention of the Sustainability Library was to engage students with ideas about sustainability through use of the library's resources, while the MoLib would be used to support a series of talks in various parts of the college focusing on sustainability.

Planning the project

The project was proposed to the BA Spatial Design team by Barbara Salvadori (LCC workshop technician). It was supported by the LCC library team (in the early stages by Matt Hunt, Leila Kassir and Ruth Collingwood, and later by Tania Olsson, Richenda Gwilt and me as the librarian for the spatial design course). Learning Zone team members Derek Churchill and Paul Rogers were also involved in the project.

In order to design the space with a sustainability theme, the students had to research how other students used resources in the library and how space was used for interaction. In early February Valerie Mace and Silvia Grimaldi (the BA spatial design course leaders) invited me to view some of the designs as the students presented them to their cohort in their studio, in order for the library to express a view and have an active input into the project. It was a real pleasure to be involved at this level, and it gave me an insight into how the students form their designs using sketches, plans and models, and how the project occurred at a creative and practical stage in the development of their practice.

The spatial design students subsequently tested their ideas by presenting them to a peer group of students during Green Week, a week in February when the University of the Arts London (UAL) highlights and promotes environmental and sustainability-themed events.

The spatial design academic staff and the members of the library team judged the students' design proposals in the summer term and the winners were announced. The library was looking for a design that would take into consideration the multi-use nature of the space, which is used both as a pop-up space for sessions and talks and as a group-working area for the students. We were also keen to acquire a design that would not require too much management by the library team.

Work in progress – designing the space and building the MoLib

This phase involved the reconfiguration of the space and the construction of the unit, which took place between June and September 2014. The winning students, Joy Williams and Ashleigh Nutton, worked closely with Silvia and Valerie, Barbara and Gregor Garber (LCC workshop technician) to prepare the project for construction through detailed design, adjustments and costings, while also working to specified deadlines and budgets. Joy and Ashleigh then worked with Barbara, Gregor and Rob Bell (visiting spatial design tutor) to construct the area and the unit, while the library team was briefed at regular meetings throughout the summer.

Active involvement of the library team, and our views on all stages of the design – such as the colours for the walls, the use of environmentally-friendly

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Sustainability Library project: BA Spatial Design students and library staff

London College of Communication Library, University of the Arts London

paint, the recycled material and flame-resistant seating, and health and safety aspects – were considered at regular meetings.



Work in progress
Photos: Leo Clarey



MoLib in situ

Ambitions for the use of the Sustainability Library space and the Mobile Unit

The Sustainability Library and MoLib were formally launched on 13 October 2014 at a reception attended by students and staff. Introductions were made by Silvia, Valerie (BA Spatial design course leaders) and by Joy and Barbara, who explained their thinking behind the project, and expressed satisfaction that the project had achieved their aim. Joy explained that the letters S – E – E – D on the chalkboard stand for 'sustainable', 'environmental', 'ecological' and 'durable', and serve to attract students to write their ideas and thoughts about sustainability for viewing on the board. A further presentation, to which I contributed on behalf of the library, was made to UAL academic and support staff during the university's Learning and Teaching Week in January 2015.

Future plans to use the Sustainability Library space for lectures and talks by sustainability experts are still to be finalised. In addition to internal talks, it is proposed to bring in experts from a rich and diverse cross-section of practitioners in the fields of design, education, print and production, including forecasters and activists. These talks will be for all UAL students and staff who have an interest in sustainability. The MoLib will be used as part of the lecture series as a physical representation of the Sustainability Library. Each expert will select references, resources and books to be housed in the mobile library unit. These books will be stored in the MoLib for the duration of the project. As well as enhancing a community of practice, it is hoped that the sustainability-themed talks will result in the library's collection being given a higher profile, while also encouraging a culture of sharing between staff and students in an informal and relaxed way.



Sustainability Library with furnishings; the white wall is for projections, as this is also a pop-up space.



Expansive view of Sustainability Library, including 'SEED' chalkboard
Photos: Paul Rogers

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Sustainability Library project: BA Spatial Design students and library staff London College of Communication Library, University of the Arts London

The Sustainability Library space has demonstrated that students and staff can work collaboratively and with positive results in order to produce an attractive, robust and engaging space, which allows students to use the space in a relaxed and social way.

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Gathering user insight on a shoestring



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Library Services at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) is entering a period of significant change over the coming years as it works towards the development of a new flagship library (due in 2018) at the Copperas Hill site in the city centre. As a result, the library has an exciting opportunity to design a service that genuinely puts user experience at the heart of service delivery. The starting point for these developments involved investigating user perception and insight in order to inform planning for the new library. Although the department was aware of larger-scale studies carried out by both Edge Hill University (Ramsden and Carey, 2014) and Judge Business School (University of Cambridge) (Priestner, 2015), it was not in a position to commit the resources, either human or financial, required to run studies of this magnitude and scope. Therefore the challenge was to find a mechanism to gather user insight but with limited budget and staff resource.

The solution lay in carrying out small-scale diary mapping exercises. The pilot exercises took place in 2014 and was led by a small project team of only three members. It was agreed to recruit up to twenty students to maintain a free text diary detailing all the times they used the physical library during a three-week period. It was felt that this method would encourage the user to consider not just how they used the library, but also why they chose to engage in that way and what their perception of the experience was. The project team met with the participants prior to the study and outlined what the purpose of it was and what the end objectives were, and offered some general guidelines as to how to complete the diaries. A £50 voucher was offered as an incentive in return for submitting a completed diary satisfactorily. The criteria for a satisfactory return were inclusion of more than five interactions with the library and sufficient description of that experience to provide the insight required.

Following the specified three-week period, fifteen diaries were received. Despite our not having targeted specific participants, there was a reasonably representative sample of undergraduates and postgraduates, and full- and part-time students across a range of disciplines and levels. The data was analysed, both by the project team reading through all the diaries to gather insight, and by using Leximancer concept mapping software, which identifies key themes and trends from qualitative data sources. The analysis identified two themes as particularly strong: space and books.

With regard to space, it was interesting to note how many of the participants valued the scholarly environment of the libraries, believing it to be conducive improving their studies. Several participants also highlighted their appreciation of the silent areas and the efforts staff made to maintain silence in these areas. Some commented that studying in the building where they had to hand in their assignment maximised the available time for completing their work.

The second key trend identified by this study was that of books, demonstrating the high value that students still attach to the print collections. Many respondents made particular reference to the fact that their decision to use the library over and above other study spaces was influenced by the accessibility of print resources for their academic discipline. Some students chose to visit the library where their subject's print resources were kept, even if another library was nearer. This high value placed on print resources was not reflected in similar references to the library's online resources, although this may have been because the study asked specifically about user experience of library spaces.

Nevertheless, despite the valuable insight described above, some difficulties were experienced with this methodology. Firstly, although the project team felt that these diaries made very interesting reading, the disparate returns made data analysis time-consuming, and it was difficult to draw overall conclusions. In addition, because a set template was not provided, responses ranged from 3,000-word essays to 20-line tables, and from highly insightful descriptions of library activity to personal details and descriptions of issues that were unrelated

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Gathering user insight on a shoestring

to this study. It was felt that were the project to be run again, it would be advisable to request more structure to the returns.

Because of the lack of reference to use of the electronic library, and to help fulfil a strategic aim (namely, to develop our digital collections and usage), it was decided to rerun a version of this project when the opportunity arose in 2015. This time, focus would be on user perception of the electronic library to see whether the electronic collections were valued as highly as the print. Drawing on the lessons from the first iteration of this exercise, a fixed template was created for the reflective logs to aid with data analysis. Following advice from colleagues who attended the influential UX conference held in Cambridge in March 2015, a table was created for responses to the following headings:

- Date
- Where are you?
- What are you using for access?
- E-library resources used
- What are you wanting to do?
- Positive aspects of experience?
- Negative aspects of experience?

After a short promotional campaign, 42 expressions of interest were received to take part in the study. Unlike the previous time the study was run, the respondents were extremely heavily weighted towards students in the Applied Professional Studies Faculty. Therefore they were carefully selected so as to have as varied a sample as possible. Only 8 participants returned their diaries, with a further participant submitting more general reflections, because of an insufficient level of engagement with the e-library during the fortnight.

Although the sample size means that it is impossible to draw specific conclusions, the responses did suggest areas for further investigation. For example, there was some correlation between satisfaction with the search facility and how specific the search was. When searches were based on keywords there were some complaints that search results contained too many irrelevant entries. Another area for potential further investigation is e-books, usage of which was very little mentioned, with respondents being more likely to use the online library to consult the catalogue for print titles than to download e-books. This will inform ongoing developments of e-book content and platforms.

Another pleasing general trend was the overall contentment with the electronic library itself, with several references being made to its convenience and the range of resources available. Paradoxically, there were both compliments relating to the login process ('quick login process') and complaints ('Logging-in to the E-Library can be slightly confusing with the multiple logins').

As with the pilot, this study had some limitations. Firstly, the sample was extremely small and very heavily weighted towards one particular faculty, whilst another faculty was entirely unrepresented. This is likely to be due to timing: constraints on staff resource limited meant that the study had to run during the last two weeks of semester, so many students would have already completed their assignments or would not be actively engaging with the electronic library. Postgraduates were heavily represented in comparison to undergraduates. Again, timing is the likely reason for this: at such a late stage in the term, postgraduates were far more likely to still be actively studying than undergraduates. Therefore, it is highly recommended that future iterations of this study be run earlier in the semester so as to attract a more representative user group.

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Gathering user insight on a shoestring

A second limitation of the study was caused by the greater structure of the returns, following findings from the pilot. Although it did succeed in making the data analysis much easier, the findings lacked the same level of insight into the emotional aspect of interactions with the library, which was a real strength of the 2014 pilot. As a result, it is proposed that future versions of this study include a free text section on 'general perceptions', in order to gather some further qualitative data to encourage more students to share their feelings about how well the library meets their needs and expectations.

The purpose of these exercises has been to inform new library developments. Therefore, findings have been fed back to the library development team. For example, the 2014 study showed how much students prefer to study near their subject resources when in the library. As a result, the new library will incorporate subject hubs throughout the building, complete with study spaces available nearby. Similarly, the overwhelming appreciation of silent areas has supported the proposal for a silent reading room at Copperas Hill, where the design and the infrastructure will contribute to making the area truly silent.

The findings are also having a current impact on service design. The insights gained in the 2015 study have been fed back to the Collections and Digital Systems team who are considering how to improve accessibility of the electronic library, based on this feedback.

Although this style of study does not have the same level of comprehensiveness and insight as the large-scale studies described above, the project team would recommend this methodology based on the following benefits:

- **Low resource intensity.** On both occasions when LJMU Library Services has run a diary mapping exercise, the core project team has consisted of only three people (albeit with input from others) who have conducted all aspects of the project, including creating materials, recruitment, data collection, analysis and dissemination. In addition, the budget (excluding staff time) has not exceeded £1,000 for incentive vouchers, making it ideal if time and / or budget constraints inhibit wider scale studies.
- **Level of insight.** In spite of the small sample sizes, the project team felt that they understood the user experience more fully and had some previously held assumptions challenged by the data received. This in turn has been fed back to the relevant service development areas and given confidence that improvements are genuinely user inspired.
- **Improved user engagement.** An unexpected benefit of the study is that on each occasion, participants have felt more engaged with the library.
- **Flexibility.** This type of study can easily be adapted to suit different requirements. For example, it can be tailored to focus on different aspects of the service (e.g. library spaces, electronic resources). Equally, it can be effective as a research tool with either a small or large sample size, and can be implemented relatively easily.

These exercises have provoked so many discussions and areas for further investigation that the project team are currently proposing to expand this study to cover all disciplines and levels. This will help to map service interactions, with a view to designing the service for Copperas Hill according to user preference, rather than dictating user behaviour. In addition, it is hoped that by implementing a larger-scale study, subject-based trends and differences in study levels can be identified. All this will improve the department's marketing capabilities and can help ensure that the service best meets user requirements both now and in the future.

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Gathering user insight on a shoestring

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Employability project at City University

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The Library Employability Group at City University London began work in August 2014. Our aim was to explore how Library Services can assist students in developing skills to enable them to be employable in the future and how the Library can add value to the work of other departments such as Careers, Student Development & Outreach.

Our objectives included

- to investigate some best practice in other universities
- to build a current careers print collection
- to produce an online Library Employability guide
- to liaise and collaborate with other departments such as Careers.

We researched universities such as Edinburgh and Hertfordshire that have graduate attributes and have aligned their information literacy programmes with these. We also looked at experience-based design, which has been used in the NHS to improve services, based on the ideas, experiences and narratives of service users.

In order to gain a better insight into attitudes around employability, we conducted a survey asking students and staff (undergraduates, postgraduates, researchers, academics and library staff) about their past experiences, previous resources they had used and how they felt Library Services could assist them in this area. We subsequently conducted a small number of in-depth interviews with students from each level of academic study in order to expand on their survey responses.

In February 2015 we launched our Employability guide (<http://libguides.city.ac.uk/employability>) produced using LibGuides software. This highlights resources for employability such as social media, finding company information and using study skills resources. It is partially 'crowdsourced' from our students and contains some resources suggested by them. We engaged with students and staff from different Schools in the university such as Business, Library & Information Science, Social Sciences. The area where more content was requested was 'Finding company information', so we developed this further.

To accompany the guide we offered a range of workshops covering current awareness, researching company information and building a social media profile to assist with employability. We believe having strong information literacy, digital literacy and research skills assists students in obtaining and retaining a job. The workshops were offered to both students and careers staff and administrated using our online booking system LibCal (<http://libcal.city.ac.uk>).

In addition to this we received some investment from our Library Leadership Team to develop a current careers collection on interview skills, job hunting and communication skills, etc. To make the items easily retrievable we have tagged these titles on our Library Management System; we are also building up a careers 'reading list' using our reading list software, Reading Lists Online (<http://readinglists.city.ac.uk/index.html>).

We had the great opportunity to present a paper about our work at Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference (LILAC) in April 2015. We were pleased to have questions and feedback on our project from colleagues from other universities. Our presentation and conference reports can be found on the LILAC 2015 Archive webpage.

A real benefit for us has been forging closer relationships with our Careers, Student Development & Outreach Department and we can signpost and

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Employability project at City University

recommend each others' services more effectively. We have really enjoyed the opportunity to work on this project and speak to students about their experiences to inform our services and resource provision.

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From the library to the workplace

How information professionals can support the development of employability skills

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Background

Employability is now an unavoidable term in UK Higher Education.¹ As institutions compete for prospective students, graduate destination statistics have become key.² There is an increasing drive to equip students with the right skills to help them find employment upon graduation and to attract the attention of a limited pool of graduate recruiters.

In 2014 SCONUL's User Experience and Success Strategy Group commissioned a review of the literature on current practice in the development of employability skills.³ It aimed both to demonstrate the relevance of Information Literacy (IL) and to provide the basis to develop an advocacy tool for libraries in the future. Since its publication there have been further initiatives in this fast-moving area⁴ and many examples cited in the original SCONUL review have since changed. However, this article seeks to highlight some of the key points and to provide background for anyone new to employability skills development.

Defining employability

There is a tension between the idea of employability as a checklist of 'skills, understandings and personal attributes' and the difficulty of defining this (Higher Education Academy, 2012, p. 4). Ultimately, employability skills include whatever makes graduates 'more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations'.⁵ Graduate attributes are therefore generally recognised to encompass more than an academic degree, whilst not being purely skills-based. This was well summarised in 2013 by the president of Universities UK: 'Employability is in the end a complex blend of skill, attitude, experience, motivation and interest, underpinned by the ability to learn and to apply that learning to the challenges that work presents (Snowden, 2013).'

Employers also vary in their understanding of graduate attributes, but many place 'motivation and interest, organisational fit, skills and work experience higher up their list of desirable criteria' than academic achievement (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p. 9). This makes the whole area of 'commercial awareness' a key one, since it is how students can come to understand the organisation and sector and so demonstrate their interest. Commercial awareness is also an area in which employers repeatedly complain that candidates and recruits are not strong enough.⁶ This is perhaps the most pertinent area for librarians, who are well-placed help to equip students with the skills for finding and evaluating information about businesses. In doing so, they can also help to improve other areas where employers frequently bemoan the lack of graduate skills: problem-solving and IT.⁷

Careers and employability frameworks

Careers practitioners in different institutions use a range of models to support their approach to career planning and guidance.⁸ These typically include a 'research' element,⁹ but the role of information professionals in providing or interpreting careers information is not well established and few careers services employ professionally qualified librarians.¹⁰ Although recent models of career development have looked explicitly at the role of online careers information in particular, they are written by guidance professionals and make no mention of libraries or information professionals: 'The easy availability of online information masks the fact that there is considerable skill in knowing how to ask the right questions of this sort of information and interpret what you are being told' (Longridge, Hooley and Staunton, 2013, p. 6).

This description is instantly recognisable as IL, and the same can be said for many elements of Hooley's 'Seven Cs' framework, which includes 'critiquing': 'the ability to understand the nature of online career information and resources, to analyse its provenance and to consider its usefulness for a career' (Hooley,

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From the library to the workplace

How information professionals can support the development of employability skills

2012, p. 6). Hooley acknowledges the presence of IL but highlights the criticism it has attracted for undervaluing 'socially transmitted forms of information'. He argues that this would be 'a considerable limitation in any attempt to repurpose the concept for career, where implicit and socially transmitted forms of knowledge and information are recognised as being of crucial importance' (*ibid.*).

However, librarians are already involved in helping their users to navigate socially mediated online information.¹¹ Indeed, the ANCIL (A new curriculum for information literacy) model of IL includes 'Finding and using people as information sources', including in person and online through social media (Secker and Coonan, 2011, p. 12). Perhaps, as Abson and Lahlafi (2013, p. 14) suggest, the main reason why librarians 'are missing an opportunity to demonstrate our value' in relation to IL in the workplace is simply our 'choice of language'.

Employability frameworks and skills awards

Secker (2012, p. 8) posits that employability frameworks like the Higher Education Academic Record (HEAR) may provide 'impetus for change' when trying to convince academics of the value of IL. HEAR provides a standardised approach for undergraduate students to record their achievements at university so that these can be shared with prospective employers.¹² However, there is still debate around how meaningful HEAR is for employers,¹³ and usage by libraries was hard to find.¹⁴

One of the stated aims of HEAR¹⁵ is to promote the increasingly prevalent institutional skills awards.¹⁶ These are typically managed by the careers service or students union and are usually not based on shared models but developed individually.¹⁷ This represents a challenge for librarians attempting to contribute to their delivery, since there will be no single approach to content or management.¹⁸ However, most awards do include something similar to 'business and customer awareness' (CBI, 2011, p. 13) and this is often a core component. There is therefore often an opportunity for librarians to provide stand-alone content for awards – sometimes working collaboratively with colleagues from other departments – or for existing IL sessions to be accredited, thus potentially increasing student uptake.¹⁹ Alternatively, libraries can provide support with what Mann (2011, p. 5) records as the top three challenges: scalability, staff resource and academic buy-in.

Framing Information Literacy for employability

As the ANCIL framework clearly outlines, the same skills to find, critically evaluate and use information that students need for their degrees are readily applied to the workplace.²⁰ There is not room here to provide detailed examples of library involvement in employability skills development, but these are now available.²¹

The majority of employability skills training run either entirely or in part by information professionals relates to researching an employment sector or individual organisation.²² The emphasis tends to be that finding and using information effectively not only helps with career decisions but also ensures that applicants stand out in application processes²³ and throughout their careers. Training often uses library resources such as electronic databases but is, to a large extent, an easier 'sell' than traditional IL sessions, since many students will be concerned about their future careers. Other sessions relate to using social media effectively for a job search or to manage digital identity.²⁴ A different kind of session mentioned by Luker and Nephin (2013, p. 13) is 'information literacy skills in the workplace', which asks students to imagine themselves as a researcher in a role relevant to their own degree.

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From the library to the workplace

How information professionals can support the development of employability skills

There are examples of librarians and careers advisers delivering training jointly, with a focus on their individual areas of expertise.²⁵ Oakley (2013, p. 25) provides a helpful overview of the advantages of collaboration with other parts of the institution: both the obvious contribution to the employability agenda and as another way of promoting information literacy: '[...] used critically, social media is a valuable information source for current awareness and learning materials'.

Key messages for information professionals

- Explicitly address employability skills in existing IL sessions (and their promotion)²⁶ to demonstrate relevance to the wider institution and students.
- Seek to have a link on the websites of other university departments and services (such as careers and the Students' Union) in order to reinforce the relevance of the library's training to employability skills development.²⁷
- Be proactive about contributing to existing awards and training – make contact with other services.
- Careers and other student services vary greatly in structure and responsibilities – find out how they operate in your institution.
- Accredited involvement in a core component of the institution's skills award or employability framework is the ideal.
- Business and customer awareness and digital literacy are elements well suited to delivery by librarians.
- Find out what training already exists so that you can add to it rather than creating stand-alone content.
- Work with other parts of the institution to decide how best to market your skills and training (the name chosen for the individual training sessions is important).
- Opportunities to co-present with someone from a non-library background may result in a larger audience and advantages for both departments.
- Consider running training for colleagues in other services both to raise your profile within the institution and to increase the chance of working collaboratively in the future.
- Improved relationships across the institution help everyone, including students.
- Help to promote and grade existing award schemes,²⁸ even if delivering training yourself is not an option.
- Universities will have an employability strategy and there may be a group you can join in relation to this.

Notes

- 1 Examples include: Harvey, 2003; Higher Education Academy, 2015b; Thompson et al., 2013; Woods and Murphy, 2013. Employability and IL was also a theme for the Librarians' Information Literacy Annual Conference in 2013: see LILAC, 2013.
- 2 Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2015; Universities UK, 2010
- 3 Wiley, 2014
- 4 More recent initiatives include activity collated by InformAll, 2015, and CILIP, 2015. Both mention the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Information Literacy group and a literature review on employability and IL by Inskip, 2014.
- 5 Higher Education Academy, 2012, p. 4

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From the library to the workplace

How information professionals can support the development of employability skills

- 6 See reports from the Confederation of British Industry: CBI, 2011, p. 15; CBI, 2013, p. 57.
- 7 CBI, 2013, p. 13
- 8 See, for example: Careers Group, 2014
- 9 Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p. 9
- 10 Wiley, 2011
- 11 Oakley, 2013
- 12 Higher Education Academy, 2015a
- 13 Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair, 2013, p. 7
- 14 Higher Education Academy, 2015a
- 15 Higher Education Academy, 2015c
- 16 AGCAS (the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) has established a Skills Awards task group; their 2011 survey elicited responses from 67 different institutions that run awards, many of which had been 'developed collaboratively' across institutions (AGCAS, 2012, p. 1).
- 17 Mann, 2011, p. 3
- 18 See Wiley, 2014, for a snapshot of the continually changing employability skills awards landscape.
- 19 See the January 2015 case study from Library Services at University of West of England (UWE), who worked with the Careers and Employability Service to include library-related content in the employability award and also developed new sessions jointly (SCONUL, 2015).
- 20 Secker, 2012
- 21 See Wiley, 2014, and case studies from SCONUL, 2015.
- 22 Students are likely to be shown how to ascertain a company's structure, function, aims, recent news and competitors.
- 23 Whitmell, 2012
- 24 Wiley, 2014
- 25 See: Woods and Murphy, 2013; University of Durham, 2015; Wiley, 2012.
- 26 An excellent example of this is the University of Sheffield Library, 2015. Their pages about 'information literacy in the workplace' are extremely clear and demonstrate the relevance to employability.
- 27 Even the simple act of a careers service providing a link from its own website to the library's helps to demonstrate the relevance of training offered. See, for example, the University of Leeds, 2014, which encourages users to seek out library sessions to develop their skills.
- 28 Some libraries help with the marking of skills award submissions (Wiley, 2014).

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From the library to the workplace

How information professionals can support the development of employability skills

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From the library to the workplace

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From the library to the workplace

How information professionals can support the development of employability skills

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Designing Libraries

The gateway to library buildings past, present, future

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What is it?

Designing Libraries provides a freely accessible resource for everyone interested in design and innovation in libraries. It is a not-for-profit organisation funded through sponsorship from companies with an interest in building development and design.

SCONUL along with CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals), SCL (Society of Chief Librarians) and SLA (School Library Association) are partner organisations and all are members of the Advisory Board. Given the nature of the Designing Libraries enterprise, the SCONUL representative on the Advisory Board is drawn from the User Experience and Success Strategy Group and is currently Liz Waller from the University of York. The Advisory Board meets twice a year in May and November.

A bit of history

The Designing Libraries project in the UK came into being in 2003 as part of the Government's strategy for the future development of the public library service in England over the next ten years. The pilot website was initially granted funds from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) to go live and this was carried out by the Information Services department of the University of Wales Aberystwyth under the direction of CILIP's Library Buildings Project Steering Group. At a later date the SCONUL database of library buildings was also added to the Designing Libraries database. Designing Libraries is now a self-financing not-for-profit organisation funded through sponsorship from such companies as Bisset Adams, Demco Interiors and Harrow Green.

Features

Designing Libraries has a lot to offer, whether you are thinking about a new library or refurbishment and want to get to grips with the latest developments,

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are looking for suppliers or just want to keep up to speed with library buildings such as the new £11m steel clad building for the Middle East Centre at St Anthony's College, Oxford.

- Designing Libraries Database will give you key facts about a development, the David Wilson Library at the University of Leicester entry can be seen below. Key facts can include such gems as student numbers, m², architect, interior designer and number of study spaces. Many entries also provide photos – inspiration if you are trying to identify libraries to visit.

The screenshot shows the 'David Wilson Library' entry on the Designing Libraries website. The header includes the 'Designing Libraries' logo and 'demcointeriors' branding. The navigation menu includes Home, About us, Database, Featured libraries, Resources, Marketplace, News, Events, and Contact. The 'Database' section is active, showing search options and a Twitter follow button. The main content area displays the library's name, address (PO Box 248, University Road, Leicester, LE1 9QD), and a 'Library building record' with details such as 'Originally added: 19th June 2009, 5:06pm' and 'Last revised: 1st February 2012, 4:04pm'. A table lists key facts: Sector (Higher Education), Parent institution (University of Leicester), Name of member organisation (SCONUL), Address (PO Box 248, University Road, Leicester), Postal code (LE1 9QD), Library URL (http://www.le.ac.uk/library/), Library email (libdesk@le.ac.uk), Country (England), Category of library (Central/Main library/LRC), Population served (23,000), Student numbers (21,000), Nature of project (Refurbishment, Extension), Size of library (square metres) (15,500), Number of floors (5), Year of completion (2008), Architect and architect category (Associated Architects), and Project consultant (Faithful & Gould). A vertical gallery of images on the right shows the library's exterior and interior spaces, including the extension atrium, atrium and central street, study area, and graduate school reading room.

- Featured libraries and case studies is Designing Libraries' own selection of library design projects from around the world, and individual library case studies from sponsors and advertisers.
- Resources is a directory of web links and sources of information on libraries, library organisations, library buildings, library design, technology and innovation.
- Marketplace is a guide to architects, designers, library furniture suppliers, technology companies and other providers of products and services to libraries.

The screenshot shows the 'Marketplace' page on the Designing Libraries website. The header includes the 'Designing Libraries' logo and 'Library and archive moves, storage and retrieval' branding, along with the 'harrowgreen' logo. The navigation menu includes Home, About us, Database, Featured libraries, Resources, Marketplace, News, Events, and Contact. The 'Marketplace' section is active, showing a list of categories: Designing, planning, moving; Furniture and shelving; Library technology; Library materials; E-content and digital services; Consultancy and training; Sponsors; and Advertisers. The main content area displays the title 'A marketplace of suppliers and services for libraries' and a description: 'A guide to architects, designers, library furniture suppliers, technology companies and other providers of products and services to libraries.' Three featured images are shown: 'Designing, planning, moving' (Library architecture, building), 'Furniture and shelving' (A guide to the main suppliers of), and 'Library technology' (A directory of suppliers of library).

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- News will keep you up to date with new libraries across the world
- Events lists selected events relevant to the sector

Contributing to Designing Libraries

Designing Libraries is always keen to add new library records to the database, particularly from the academic sector. You can add your project to the site from this link <http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=15> – just look for the Help documents on the right to download the pdf which will tell you what information you will need to gather before you begin to create a new online record.

The screenshot shows the 'News' section of the Designing Libraries website. The main article is titled 'Steel-clad library for Oxford college' and is dated 1 June 2015. It describes a new building by Zaha Hadid Architects for St Antony's College, Oxford. The article includes a photograph of the building and mentions that it provides 1,127sq m of extra floor space and a 117-seat subterranean lecture theatre. A sidebar on the left lists other news items, and a 'News links' section on the right provides additional resources.

As you will see from the news feature above, Designing Libraries is also keen to report on new buildings or developments. If you think you can add to the news content you can contact Designing Libraries via the following page <http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=74>. Or if you are organising an event relevant to Designing Libraries why not get in touch to have it featured in the Events listing?

Future plans

Over the past few years the main site has been developed to increase the number of news stories and a wide selection of case studies – along with a more international perspective. Work still in progress is the development of the 'Architects Archive', inviting major architectural practices to submit designs and plans for some of the world's iconic new library buildings and interiors.

Currently the database of library buildings is held on a separate server with its own search mechanism. The plan is to transcribe the database records into 'natural language' records within the main site content, making the entire site searchable by keyword, using Google search. There will also be a new

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searchable image gallery with photos drawn from site content. These are both considerable development projects for a 2016 launch.

Contacts

You can keep up to date by registering for the free e-mail newsletter from the Designing Libraries home page www.designinglibraries.org.uk. If you would like to comment on Designing Libraries or suggest developments for the future you can do this via the website or contact me: liz.waller@york.ac.uk.

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Guidance for authors

General information

SCONUL Focus is the journal of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries. *SCONUL Focus* aims to bring together articles, reports and news stories from practitioners in order to generate debate and promote good practice in the national libraries and the university and higher education college sector.

Contributions are welcomed from colleagues in all fields and at all levels: we request that the items contributed are concise, informative, practical and (above all!) worth reading.

Although we do not make stipulations about length we do recommend authors consult a recent issue of *SCONUL Focus* to see if their approach seems in keeping with other published pieces.

SCONUL Focus is published in both paper and electronic versions. The electronic version is on open access via the SCONUL Web site. Any author who does not wish to have their article made available via the Web should let the Editor know.

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A copy of *SCONUL Focus* can be supplied on request from a member of the Editorial Board or from SCONUL's office (e-mail: sconul@sconul.ac.uk). An online version can be found here: <http://www.sconul.ac.uk/page/sconul-focus>

Items should be submitted via e-mail to your contact on the Editorial Board or steve.rose@bcu.ac.uk

We are keen to publish images and would especially like to include author photos where possible. Please see advice below on submitting images.

Images

If submitting author photographs, please submit as a jpg file and use author surname as file name. Submit any other images as jpeg files and give filenames which can be easily associated with the article.

Submitting an article

- Submit articles as word files and to assist in the editing process, keep formatting to a minimum.
- Use author surname as the beginning of the file name.
- Complete the cover sheet for each article submitted.

House style

Please apply the following rules when submitting articles in order to adhere to the house style.

- Under the main title of the article, please include the following bylines: Author name, job title, department, organisation, e-mail address: (see previous editions on-line for examples of layout)

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Guidance for authors

- Spelling in ‘-ise’ etc. is preferred to ‘-ize’.
- Capitalisation is ruthlessly minimal. In individual libraries it is usual to refer to ‘the Library’, ‘the University’, ‘the College’ etc. Please resist this in our publication. Unless there is any ambiguity use ‘the library’ etc.
- Spell out acronyms at their first occurrence. Avoid ‘HE’ for ‘higher education’, which we prefer to write in full (the UK is the only country in the world to use the term, and our overseas readers are unfamiliar with the abbreviation HE).
- Use single quotation marks, not double.
- Web addresses should be written in full (including http://) and –where possible- be underlined for purposes of clarity. When including web addresses in either the body of the text or in a reference list, please include date accessed.

References

References should be listed using the Harvard format. For example:

Book

AUTHOR , A, N., (publication year).Title of book. Place. Publisher

Journal article

AUTHOR(S), Year of publication. Title of article. Title of journal, volume number (issue or part number), pages

Website

AUTHOR(S), Year of publication or last update. Title of page [online] [viewed date]. Available from: URL

The editorial process

Please note that the copy editor reserves the right to make modifications to articles received, without recourse to the author, if it is considered that edits made have not significantly changed the meaning or context of the article. Any proposals for significant change will be discussed with the author in the first instance.

We aim to publish each issue of *SCONUL Focus* within 8 weeks following the copy date deadline.

Anyone wishing to discuss possible articles or needing more information should contact:

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We look forward to hearing from you.

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