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# Creating the library 'wow factor'

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Maximising the effective use of limited space can be a challenge for many of us who manage library services in urban environments. At City University London we have transformed two 'library spaces' this year to create dynamic, tailored environments for students of the Sir John Cass Business School and the Department of Economics.

At Cass Business School we have a dedicated learning resource centre (LRC) located at the heart of the School. Within the available space (766 m<sup>2</sup>) we house IT labs, book and journal collections, silent and quiet study spaces, an AV editing suite, self-service and printing facilities plus a number of specialist financial databases. Managing this space so it makes effective use of resources as well as providing the required study environments can be challenging. One of the areas we felt wasn't working as well as it could was our Financial Resources Zone. This was formerly an area towards the front of the LRC, housing specialist financial resources such as Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters Datastream. Although we had tried to make the area look a little more dynamic with digital news screens, it basically remained quite uninspiring, consisting of two rows of desks with rather untidy PC towers and cables. Working with

colleagues from AV and IT Services and Property and Facilities, we came up with a business plan to create an inspirational and vibrant space, which would be tailored to our user profile and was in keeping with a leading business School.

The first thing to do was to locate this space in a more visible position, so we brought it forward to the entrance area of the LRC. Originally this prime location was occupied by our photocopiers, which didn't really showcase what we are about as a service and provided a rather uninspiring feel for students entering the LRC.

We also wanted to design an area that was tailored to our user profile. The LRC serves mostly postgraduate students who are usually studying a finance-related degree, so creating an area that reflected this theme was key. To that end we came up with the idea of a market ticker as a central feature for this area. We also included two new plasma screens running news stories from Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters. The idea was that these features would create the vibrant and dynamic feel of a trading area. We partially walled off the zone, purchased new furniture, slicker IT kit and even invested in an artificial plant!

The new Financial Resources Zone was officially opened by Richard Gillingwater CBE, Dean of Cass Business School, at the end of August 2012. In addition to significantly enhancing the student experience here (it would be no exaggeration to say the area is proving very popular), it has proved a key asset to the School and the university. It is now one of the most photographed areas of the School and is regularly shown to visitors and prospective students alike.

Earlier this year we also opened our Financial Resources Suite, which is housed in our university



library at Northampton Square in Islington. Cass undergraduates and students from the Department of Economics are taught here and they are heavy users of Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters databases, which were originally primarily located in the Cass Business School. These students had fed back to us via a number of channels (including the National Student Survey) that they wanted local access to these key resources rather than having to make the 20-minute walk to Cass to use them. Cass Business School and the Department of Economics agreed to fund additional Bloomberg and Thomson Reuters Datastream terminals. Housing this extra resource could have been a problem, but fortunately colleagues were able to make a room available in the university library that was perfect for our purposes. This room has ample space for our eight new Bloomberg and two new Datastream PCs. In addition it has a great view of the City! The room has been completely refurnished and kitted out with new IT equipment. Given the profile of the students using this room we wanted to go for more of a corporate rather than a trading feel. We are now just awaiting the arrival of a giant plasma screen on which we are going to run a global clock to finish the space off.

In both the Financial Resources Zone and the Financial Resources Suite we have been able to work with colleagues to convert existing library space into dynamic new facilities. Both areas are proving very popular with students and allow us to showcase these key resources in which we invest heavily. The challenge now is that students are saying they would like more of these types of spaces and for the existing spaces to be even bigger, so our creative skills will continue to be fully stretched.