

Developing library spaces to meet users' needs: views from those whose libraries have been transformed.

Congratulations to all of those who made it on to the shortlist for SCONUL's library design awards 2016 and special congratulations to the two overall winners, Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield (under 2,000 sq metres) and The Hive, University of Worcester (over 2,000 sq metres).

The SCONUL Focus editorial team posed a number of questions to Librarians to elicit opinions on the importance and impact of library spaces in enhancing students' learning experiences. The responses are given below.

University College London



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What do you feel is unique about your library building?

The red brick and terracotta Grade II listed Cruciform Building, originally a hospital, is iconic in its own right. As the name suggests, it was built in the shape of a cross and this diagonal plan lends itself to the creation of irregular shaped rooms. The Cruciform Hub's designers utilised its unusual footprint to introduce sight-lines and easy transition between a variety of zones, with a full spectrum of social and private spaces furnished in tones sympathetic to the fabric of the building. The Hub occupies half of the lower-ground floor, an area previously used as a servants' dining hall, a radiotherapy department and a pharmacy and which now provides a modern medical library and learning environment for today's students and healthcare staff. One of the first "hubs" being created at UCL, the Cruciform Hub is a model for the New Student Centre which will open in early 2019.



How do you feel your library supports teaching and enhances the student learning experience?

The main purpose of the Cruciform Hub is to support UCL's biomedical teaching and learning needs, and it achieves this by providing a range of spaces that fully support curriculum requirements. These include formal and informal facilities for individual and group work, flexible enough to be used for both classroom and self-directed learning, peer-to-peer tutoring and OSCE (clinical exam) practice. The environment promotes opportunities for research-based learning, with access to extensive print and online collections, e-learning resources and biomedical research and

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art collections. Social activities such as student conferences, societies and clubs are also supported, thus creating a sense of cohesion and community within the student population. As Prof. Deborah Gill, Director of the UCL Medical School, stated, 'We truly have realized the vision of a modern learning space where people want to come and learn with and from each other and I am delighted we can offer such a space to our medical students.'

How have you involved students in the design of the space?

Student involvement has been crucial to delivering the concept of "hubs" which shifts the paradigm from the academic library as detached 'provider' to students as partners in their education and experience of university life. From the outset of the project, students were involved through surveys, representation on the Project Board, workshops with the architects and impromptu conversations with library staff. Their input and feedback validated the project brief. A year in advance of the construction work a pilot space was created to trial new space configurations and technologies and the designs were adjusted. Students were consulted throughout on their preferences, individually, at student-staff fora, and through social media. We were able to demonstrate that we had listened and incorporated their ideas from overall design to refreshment facilities and even voting for their favourite chair. The students felt that they had ownership of the whole process, that the Library listened and the Hub incorporated their needs.



How did you ensure students were supported during the build phase?

The Cruciform Library was decanted to a nearby location (the UCL Science Library) for the duration of the works, maintaining access to print collections and specialist support staffed services, with a dedicated pop-up enquiry point. Arrangements were made to ensure that medical students continued to enjoy the same level of access and resource during the year, such as reserving group study spaces during their summer exam revision period, and opening a temporary computer workroom for them. Regular updates on the project were provided through student champions, committees and newsletters and flyers, banners, twitter and Facebook were all used to maintain awareness and channels of communication. A web page about the project was created, described by one student as 'absolutely brilliant', featuring news on progress, FAQs, maps and directions to alternative library facilities, and a Flickr gallery of photographs from the construction site.

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If money had been no object, what else would you have liked to incorporate?

Ideally, we would have sited teaching spaces somewhere nearby, and allowed for (a lot) more learning space in the Hub. Better spec AV equipment was originally planned for, but the budget could not stretch to this by the time we came to fit out. Wireless power would be a major desirable, to replace any floor boxes, particularly in more flexible social learning spaces.

We would have liked to incorporate the university-wide access control system (rather than a local Library system) and occupancy sensors, to help inform users of where to find a space. Extra facilities we would have liked to include are sleeping pods and space for prayer. However, we are conscious that this is a busy medical site library, and part of a family of 18 libraries across UCL. We would happily have taken over the whole of the Cruciform building and provided a more consolidated Library presence in Bloomsbury with a wider range of services.

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University of Huddersfield



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What do you feel is unique about your library building?

Heritage Quay is unique in the approach we take to opening up access to archival collections in a wide variety of ways. This is seen in the design of the facility as well as the services we offer – and most importantly, the attitude of the team!

The building incorporates world-leading multimedia to enable digital interaction with the collections. Most notably the “big curvy screen” where you use gestures to control a “Minority Report” style IMAX-sized peek at the collections – watch it in action here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xf07sHKAXTs>

There is a good balance of space between exhibition and flexible public spaces for hands-on access to collections and direct access to expertise, recognising these are complementary activities of equal importance.

Our “listening room” provides the facilities to digitise obsolete formats like LPs, audio and video cassettes on demand – as well as a piano to play and record scores.

Last but not least, we have exceptionally stylish loos!

How do you feel your library supports teaching and enhances the student learning experience?

The team in Heritage Quay has been recognised for our work to support teaching and learning both within the University and also among adult and primary/secondary school learners. We were the only archive to be recognised in the Royal Historical Society’s inaugural prizes for Public History in 2015. In addition to teaching classes as a formal part of particular modules, we also promote informal learning opportunities and the use of the collections for creativity. Recent examples include <http://cargocollective.com/georgewoodproject/About-George-Wood-Project> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgMiyajbQm8>

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We offer student work placements in a professionally-accredited service, where students not only benefit from using unique materials in their research or practice, but also experience the information profession from the inside. Here's what some of our students had to say <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V16ALtxjZcg> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r82UZjFNp24> And of course undergraduate and postgraduate students use the collections for their research including dissertations.

How have you involved students in the design of the space?

During the design phase in 2012/3 we undertook extensive consultation with our existing but also potential users – the chief impetus for the Heritage Lottery Fund/University funded project, which included these capital works, was to increase access to unique heritage collections. The clear message from the students was that whilst they wanted digital and virtual access, they clearly valued and were inspired by analogue access.

So the design of the facility promotes understanding of the richness of scale of the collections by simple devices such as “portholes” offering a view into the archival repositories. This also promotes awareness of the archival functions going on “behind the scenes” and explored on our “Through the Quay-hole” regular tours.

How did you ensure students were supported during the build phase?

As this was a new facility created in a space that had become redundant due to other services moving elsewhere, we were able to maintain our existing offer to students and staff during the 9 month build. We were also able to develop new areas of our offer, such as work placements focussing on exhibition curation and publicity, in the run-up to opening.

If money had been no object, what else would you have liked to incorporate?

A conservation studio and conservators! We have a great partnership with West Yorkshire Archives, who provide conservation for us – but it would be really great to have in house.

University of Hull



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What do you feel is unique about your library building?

The Brynmor Jones Library is really two buildings that have been made into one whole building through the re-development. The 1959 original Library was joined to the 1969 tower block extension via a narrow connection that had the effect of over-emphasising the different experiences between the two buildings. The Library as it now stands is one complete building right at the heart of the campus that exploits the different heritage in the two original buildings to present different learning and study spaces. The Library is also unique in opening up the Ground Floor to all, having two main entrances to facilitate public access to the University Art Collection and Exhibition Hall, as well as Teaching Rooms for public lectures. Turnstiles are retained for

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access management (the Library is still primarily for University and Associate members), but their use is required only to reach the upper floors.

How do you feel your library supports teaching and enhances the student learning experience?

The Library was specifically designed to accommodate many different types of learning according to need. This ranges from traditional silent study within the Reading Room to group study in 26 dedicated study rooms or quiet study on the floors of the tower block, in groups or individually. Across the Library students can choose from traditional desks (with and without a PC) or more flexible seating at tables and/or sofa-style seating: there is also a dedicated Postgraduate Lounge for research postgraduate students and the Library provides seven Teaching Rooms within the central room booking service. Spaces aside, the re-developed Library has come with a re-developed customer services model, with staff roaming across the Floors and study areas to be on hand as required. Information points, self-issue desks and printer/copiers are available on all floors to enable students to access all they need within each of the spaces available.

How have you involved students in the design of the space?

The re-development of the Library was initiated through a student campaign that the Hull University Union developed. It was this case that persuaded the University that the Library had a strong case for investment, and as such the entire work has been student led from the start. Students were subsequently active partners in the design process that informed the detail of the re-development; it was their input that drove the decision to incorporate the variety of different learning spaces, and a specific campaign by postgraduate students that led to the dedicated study space for their needs. When opened, students were seen to take to the new spaces as if they had been using them for years, making themselves very much at home.

How did you ensure students were supported during the build phase?

It was decided at an early stage that the Library would remain open throughout the period of the re-development, a period of over two years. This was based on the desire to maintain continuity in service as far as possible for those students who would be most directly affected over this period. The re-development included the re-claiming of space previously used for teaching (which was no longer fit for purpose), allowing the creation of space for rotating decamps of stock as different parts of the Library were developed. Library staff maintained services throughout, with appropriate adaptation around changing building works. The re-development had a specific communications strategy developed for it, which kept students aware of the changes taking place in good time. In keeping with the original impetus, Hull University Union also kept students up-to-date, and helped channel any concerns about the changes so these could be attended to.

If money had been no object, what else would you have liked to incorporate?

The nature of re-developing existing buildings is that there are aspects of the original design that it is not straightforward to address. The 1969 tower block has a set of lifts running up the side of the building. These were designed for their time in terms of size, and it would have been good to incorporate new lifts to modern day specifications in the work: as it stands the lifts are completely refurbished in keeping with the re-development. Experience has also borne out the potential need to increase space in the Library (even taking account of the increase that the re-development provided), and particularly silent study space. Hence, an additional floor would certainly be used. An additional idea has been to open up the exhibition space to make it even more

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an open part of the Library, particularly given the success of the events held there to date.

University of Worcester



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What do you feel is unique about your library building?

The Hive is a striking building which tends to divide opinion – people either love or hate the design and bright gold cladding. It was built with a high level of sustainability, through the use of lots of clever features such as using water from the local river for heat exchange. But what really makes it unique is the clientele – everyone from babies to U3A make use of the integrated facilities, services and stock. This gives us as the University Library fantastic opportunities to deliver our vision of helping connect the University and local communities. The spaces are flexible enough to accommodate different uses across the year, and we can do things that would be very difficult or impossible in a conventional university library, such as having a combined study and wellbeing programme for both our students and local sixth formers <http://library.worc.ac.uk/study-happy/> We also try to support the wider library sector, by hosting events of interest to public, NHS or schools librarians.

How do you feel your library supports teaching and enhances the student learning experience?

The Hive provides a high quality environment with a variety of learning spaces, all underpinned by excellent customer service. The building itself and its management supports learners, for instance the external landscape is being monitored by Ecology students and an Operations Management module use us as a case study. There is a wide range of events, exhibitions and public lectures which enhance or feature student learning <http://www.thehiveworcester.org/whats-on.html>. But it's the integration with wider services from the County Council which really

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add value for our students. They have access to the whole public library stock, plus the County Archives and Records which are housed in The Hive; and can use computers and return books to any public library in Worcestershire. There are opportunities for curriculum / employability related work placements and volunteering positions. And because the University library service is open to all, we can provide easily accessible resources and support to learners right through their journey with us – from pre-application to alumni.

How have you involved students in the design of the space?

There was consultation with students of all ages to help us shape the vision for the building, through to drawing up the design brief and developing the services. We encouraged them to think about all parts of the building, not just those which they might use – so, for instance, how should we organise and lay out the different spaces, including the children's library. We continue to involve students as the building evolves – we are currently rethinking how one of the floors functions and are getting student opinion on the space.

How did you ensure students were supported during the build phase?

We went to a lot of time and effort to keep them informed and involved, including making use of the SU. We went to course committees and core modules to talk about the key issues that we picked up were of concern to students, and had a video made which responded to these. We had pre-opening visits for student representatives. Communication became even more important after we opened and students had to adjust to using a shared facility. We met with student reps to talk about their concerns over noise and access to stock, and reintroduced a staffed enquiries desk (we had been using a roving and referral model). This was because we received a strong message that they wanted to be able to talk to university librarians, and this seemed to help them feel it was 'their' space as well as a public library.

If money had been no object, what else would you have liked to incorporate?

The silent study space at the top of the building is popular but relatively small – we would have had more or a bigger space. A larger meeting space which could also be used for teaching would also be valuable, and is being looked at now in the rethink of the lower ground floor. And some of those funky group study pods would be great – with an integrated online system for students to book them.

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