

The SCONUL Library Design Awards 2016

Sixteen SCONUL members submitted applications for the 2016 Library Design Awards. A panel of judges from the SCONUL community undertook a careful shortlisting process to narrow this field to just four large libraries and three small to compete for the award in each category.

The shortlisted libraries stood out amongst an exciting and highly competitive field of applicants. The judging panel has visited each library and detailed citations are below. Winners will be announced at the Design Awards Showcase Event to take place on 1 December at the Museum of London. Each of the shortlisted libraries will give a short presentation highlighting the unique design elements which have made their libraries successful.

Photos of the libraries are available on our website, www.sconul.ac.uk.

The shortlisted libraries

Development over 2,000 square metres

- [The Hive, University of Worcester](#)
- [University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library](#)
- [Maynooth University Library](#)
- [Wellcome Library and the Reading Room](#)

Development under 2,000 square metres

- [Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield](#)
- [Teesside University Library](#)
- [UCL Cruciform Hub](#)

Citations for developments over 2,000 square metres

The Hive, University of Worcester

In the 4 years since it opened, the Hive has established itself as central to the life of the city and the university, despite being physically separate from the main campus. Members of the public, students and academic staff are equally welcome, and intermingle freely throughout the building.

This is an exciting and innovative development on a number of levels, as a physical building but also as an exemplar of innovative service design with the interest of the user at its heart. It succeeds because of the commitment on the part of the University and Worcester County Council and Public Library to deliver a seamless service to its customers. Staff from the public library and the university library work collaboratively to meet the needs of the different customer groups who use the shared facility without any sense of competition.

The building itself brings together in its space a variety of functions from which University users can benefit, ranging from improved access to the collections of the County Records Office and Archaeology and Archive service to a children’s library where children can read alongside their student parents. The Hive has been also been a launch pad for new and innovative ideas and the library staff have seized opportunities to develop these both to serve the academic needs of the university, and to benefit to the wider community.

The Hive exemplifies the aim of the University of Worcester “... to be an exemplar of how an institution of higher education can organise its activities to deliver outstanding public benefit, and to maximise opportunities to impact positively on its community.”

The Hive is a ‘mature’ entry to the Design Awards 2016, and the time since the development opened has allowed it to develop the service potential of the building and the partnership and to evidence the overall success of the development.

University of Hull, Brynmor Jones Library

The transformation of Hull University’s Brynmor Jones Library is a dramatic illustration of the changes that a powerful vision can deliver. In the remodelling of its spaces and services it has restated its relevance to the university’s mission and clearly enthused its users, students, academics and the public with a sense of renewal and possibility. The realignment of the entrance puts it firmly at the centre of the campus and cements its place as a gateway to the university for visitors, something that is enhanced by the new exhibition space on the ground floor to showcase the university’s art collections.

The Brynmor Jones Library now combines modern looking open and collaborative learning spaces with traditional spaces for its collections and the refurbishment retained some fine architectural features from the original building. The lighting throughout was particularly interesting.

This project is clearly transformed Hull University’s library, enthused the users and delivered a building that Hull is clearly very proud of. The architects and library have clearly delivered on the vision!

Maynooth University Library

The extension to the John Paul II Library at Maynooth University successfully combines the old with the new in order to meet the University’s ambitious goals for student growth. Spaces within the library have been exploited to create opportunities for both traditional and newer styles of learning. A flexible and welcoming entrance encourages the wider community to engage with the University’s exhibitions or simply to enjoy the café spaces alongside the students and staff. The external changes make the University’s identity more visible and provides a focal point at the heart of the campus.

The atmosphere inside the library is enhanced by creative touches such as art installations, an internal garden area and interactive display features. The central atrium is light filled and enriched by panoramic views out towards the historic parts of the campus. The collaboration between the library and the architects was particularly striking and has obviously been key to the success of the development.

The team should be congratulated for their tenacity in achieving a major project in a particularly difficult economic context. This is a project that went beyond the basic library building and continues to influence future developments across the University’s campus.

Wellcome Library and the Reading Room

The development at the Wellcome Library is a vibrant transformation of space and services to serve the needs of existing stakeholders and to entice new visitors into the public facing space to engage with the collections of the Library and the broader Wellcome Collection.

The planning of the work was impressive in its thoroughness and inclusivity with staff and users contributing ideas to the development, and the inclusion of research into user behaviours and patterns of use. This thoroughness was carried through into an impressive communications strategy which kept users up-to-date as building works progressed. This included a Spotify playlist to distract whilst noisier work took place!

The Library itself is a comfortable and well thought out refurbishment of the traditional library space with excellent lighting, furniture and internal decor. A new jewel in the crown is the Rare Materials Room where users can consult sensitive materials in a spacious and well-equipped environment, a space much appreciated in feedback from users.

The visiting panel was particularly impressed by the way in which the reimagined Reading Room with soft furnishings, interactive displays and stunning lighting features, has provided the opportunity to showcase items from the whole Wellcome Collection, and the empowerment of Library and Collections staff who now work collaboratively on developing exhibitions and engaging with visitors.

This is an exciting, successful and inspirational development which demonstrates flair, imagination and creativity in improving the experience of visitors irrespective of the purpose of their visit.

Citations for developments under 2,000 square metres

Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield

Heritage Quay is an excellent example of a repurposing of social space within a wider library and student services environment, in order to achieve some very clear institutionally led strategic objectives. In the case of Heritage Quay, these consist of enabling access and increasing visibility of the university’s archives, whilst broadening and developing the collection and securing them for the university and for the people of Huddersfield. Heritage Quay offers large reception, gallery and seminar space as well as hi-tech interactive digital display equipment, including the ‘big curvy wall’, all of which are accessible to the public and the wider archives and research communities within Huddersfield and beyond. Heritage Quay allows for heritage to be discovered and facilitated in a way that makes it inclusive, welcoming and accessible, without always having to be led by the library. In the words of one stakeholder who spoke to the judges “Heritage Quay has completely broken down the barriers between the university and the town. It is now the gateway to the university for the people of Huddersfield, and we’ve never had that before.”

The visibility and use of the collections has increased massively as a result of the initiative and this is evident when talking to the active scholars and researchers from the university and the wider Huddersfield community who are making use of the resource. The whole project has been driven by an ambitious vision for the University of Huddersfield archives and as a result, has completely transformed how heritage is accessed and used in Huddersfield.

Teesside University Library

The development comprises a new entrance and social learning area on the ground floor, complete with cafe, and a new large enclosed silent study area on an upper floor which had previously been open to noise from the building’s central atrium. The project, which had been reduced in scope due to funding constraints, benefitted from clear strategic objectives linked to the overall success of the university and the partial refurbishment is already viewed by the university as an exemplar for other campus improvements. Student feedback has also been very positive and the university has already seen an improvement in NSS and other student satisfaction scores which it attributes to the development.

Despite the reduction in scope of the project, it nevertheless facilitated and delivered a number of significant service redesign initiatives including rationalisation of service

points, extended use of student workers, and co-location of complementary student facing services within the new entrance area. Given the reduced scale of the project the impact on service transformation has been particularly impressive and profound. A particular strength of the project was the use of creative customer consultation mechanisms to inform the development. This included photo elicitation interviews to prompt and encourage student feedback on design issues.

UCL Cruciform Hub

The UCL Cruciform Hub provides an up-to-date, well presented space and demonstrates some excellent design features. In particular it combines both traditional and modern design elements which are reflective of the delivery of a modern learning space in an historical building. The design supports and sustains the signature identity of a medical library. It is a highly usable facility which is proving very popular and is well liked by its users.

The new space has provided a number of new opportunities for staff to engage in a range of academic and promotional activities and has enabled staff to be more 'visible' within the space. It has also enabled the provision of increased opening hours and facilitated the exhibition of art works and special collections which is raising awareness of some previously hidden resources.

The proto-typing approach taken by the project team was particularly strong, with furniture and configurations being piloted during the developmental phase of the project. The project has also provided a standard for the future development of other learning spaces at UCL.

The Cruciform Hub development team are to be commended for their strong focus on user-engagement and user-needs in the planning of the space and for ensuring that the design was sensitive to the service requirements of a traditional medical library as well as meeting the learning preferences and study needs of 21st century students.