



tlc@bedford: Social Learning at Royal Holloway

**M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries, Business Meeting,
January 23rd 2009**

Royal Holloway
University of London





Students Love Bedford Library

- `I think it's brilliant compared to the old layout! Now we can have open discussions – you can do a lot more in here. Plus, there is still the silent study area. Students are able to relax and study at the same time. I think it will help students perform better in their studies as it is a much better environment in which to study`
- `The design is great as there are areas where groups can actually study. The quiet areas are well placed. I think it's great that the College has invested in the Library, while the café is also a good investment`
- `Cool and modern`
- `Eating sushi in the Library, how weird is that?`
- `We love the Library`



But Not All of Them

- `What do you get for your sushi?`
- `An interactive pond in the library`
- `Semi-transparent curtains to mark boundaries on the Wagamama style tables`
- `Security scanners in the middle of the entrance doors`
- `Well: What a waste of money !! Especially the projector machine when u walk in!`”



Royal Holloway University of London Library Services

What are they talking about?

Royal Holloway Library is on three sites –

- Founder's Library, situated in the 19th-century Founder's building inspired by the Chateau de Chambord
- Bedford Library, opened in 1993
- Music Library located within the Music Department
- Annual library budget: approx. £3m
- 44 fte staff
- Half a million users per annum
- Despite improvements, the Library received 69% rating in 2008 National Student Survey, i.e. below the 1994 Group median



What are they talking about specifically?

- tlc@bedford: the name given to Level 2 of the Bedford Library which was transformed over the summer of 2008 into a social learning space
- www.rhul.ac.uk/information-services/TLC
- The space (1,000 sq. m. approx) provides books, digital resources, IT facilities and group study areas in a fresh, contemporary environment
- More than 200 seats organised to provide a variety of study areas
- Group study areas from open plan to private
- 45 thin client pc workstations
- Refreshment area with a Japanese theme (and Teahouse)
- Equipment loan facilities; whiteboards; e-beams
- Self-service kiosks
- Short loan collection; photocopying, printing, binding services
- Shared IT/library helpdesk
- For the reality look at this film: http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=klouRhI_VpA



Screengrabs from tlc@bedford video (1)



Screengrabs from tlc@bedford video (2)



Screengrabs from tlc@bedford video (3)



Why?

- Concerns about library performance in surveys such as NSS and i-Graduate Student Barometer survey
- Les Watson, appointed as Interim Director of Information Services, with the brief of making campus-wide recommendations about enhanced learning spaces
- Desk research; review based on 45 meetings with individuals/groups across Royal Holloway
- Emerging from this was a widely acknowledged lack of a social learning space and a will to develop such a space
- Consultation included a Facebook group called Love your library:
www.rhul.ac.uk/loveyourlibrary
- Major discussion point: café element
- Bedford Library identified as the best location due to combination of extended opening hours, availability of staff support/learning resources and popularity at heart of campus



Who and When By?

- Decision made to go ahead in February 2008
- Budget of £1 million
- Les Watson's estimated timescale: 8 months to 18 months

- Designers, contractors, project managers
 - - Nomad (designers) www.nomad-rdc.com
 - - Vivid Interiors – interior fit out and refurbishment contractors (www.vividinteriors.com)
 - - project managers – Ridge (www.ridge.co.uk)
 - - Les (www.leswatson.net)
 - - Royal Holloway, of course (www.rhul.ac.uk)

- Deadline for completion: 22nd September 2008
 - Partial handover achieved by that date
 - Full handover and full operation: 13th October 2008

- Library remained open throughout



Impact

- Students moved in with immediate effect
- Space is working well as noted through student comments/feedback
- Culture change for staff: shush has been replaced by sushi
- Noise, mobile phones, eating and drinking are permitted throughout the space
- So far so good, but need to experience a full academic-year cycle
- Need to evaluate impact on the student experience in general and on modes of learning in particular
- Working with JISC infoNet and the JISC Evaluating Learning Spaces (JELS) project



Issues

- Lessons learnt: many of these relating to project management
- Snagging continues
- Maintaining the quality of the product: managing the wear and tear
- Managing the negative feedback, e.g. money better spent on more e-resources, reading list material
- Full evaluation of the project and the space (quantitatively and qualitatively)
- Next steps: applying the success factors to further improvement of space across the Library, e.g. 21st-century space for researchers
- Sharing knowledge/learning with others



Conclusion

- `The problems of space become more serious in all the libraries, however, and on some days chairless and deskless readers may be seen on the floor in friendly proximity to dictionaries and notebooks`
- `As an extension of the classroom, library space needs to embody new pedagogies, including collaborative and interactive modalities. Significantly, the library must serve as the principal building on campus where one can truly experience and benefit from the centrality of an institution's intellectual community' Geoffrey T.Freeman, in *Library as place: rethinking roles, rethinking spaces* (CLIR 2005)
(www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub129/freeman.html)
- `When freshers arrived at College a small group, anything from three to ten in number, would coalesce into a Family...One of its important functions was the making of tea at 4 p.m. and the acquisition of extra food from a common fund. Theoretically each member of the Family took her turn to make tea for the rest, an arrangement which was particularly beneficial to the scientists whose afternoons were occupied by practicals and who therefore usually relied on the good offices of the rest. Many Families became such close groups that they maintained contact throughout their lives' C.Bingham, *The history of Royal Holloway College, 1886-1986*
- Plus ça change!



Tea at Royal Holloway

Thank you!

