

The Hive: a new university / public library and history centre, Worcester UK.

Anne Hannaford, Director of Information and Learning Services, University of Worcester, UK.
Roger Fairman, Library Systems Development, Dept. of ILS, University of Worcester, UK

Abstract

When the Hive was first conceived 6 years ago we could not have predicted the times in which the new library would be built and opened. The Hive, a £60m joint university and public library & history centre, is being built at a time of savage public library cuts in Britain. The subsequent public outcry has given libraries an unprecedented part in a national debate on cultural and social values.

The paper will set the planning and execution of the vision for the Hive in this context, and examine the way its fundamental principles resonate with the values debate. It will go on to identify the issues raised from bringing together two partners with a shared belief in education, culture and a sense of community, but with different emphases, priorities, and funding models. It will ask whether the Hive offers a model for other Universities and public authorities.

We'll see!

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### **Three Learning Outcomes:**

1. Partnership is not easy, but extremely worthwhile
2. The vision has to come from the strategic direction already established
3. That while the building provides a glorious physical focus, it is the shared service development and delivery that will define long term success.

**Anne Hannaford**

**Email: a.hannaford@worc.ac.uk**

Anne has worked at the University of Worcester since 1998, first as Head of Library Services, and then as Director of Information and Learning Services since 2003. Her portfolio includes ICT infrastructure and front facing ICT support; the VLE and e-learning technologies, and the university library service.

Following a degree in English and History at the University of Kent at Canterbury, Anne started her career as a library assistant in Kent County Library Service, but made the change to academic libraries after a couple of years. Although that public library experience is now many years ago, it has been invaluable in the development of the partnership with Worcestershire County Council culminating in the Hive. Anne has taken the lead for the University in this exciting project.

**Roger Fairman:** M.Sc., B.Sc., P.G.Dip.Lib., MCLIP.

**Email: r.fairman@worc.ac.uk**

Roger is currently responsible for Library Services Development, within the department of Information and Learning Services, at the University of Worcester, UK. He has held a number of senior posts within the Dept., and its predecessors, and has led several projects involving a high level of change management. His Involvement with the Hive project stretches back to 2003, expanding to a fulltime commitment in 2008.

Previous to coming to Worcester in 1994 he was a subject specialist in engineering & computer science at the universities of Hertfordshire and Southbank: London.

A chartered information professional since 1990, he gained his Post Graduate Diploma in 1981 and a Masters in Electronic Information Management in 2007.

## **The Hive: a new university / public library and history centre, Worcester UK.**

### **Introduction**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2003 the minutes of a liaison group set up in the late 1990's by the then University College Worcester and Worcestershire County Council recorded the genesis of an idea for a combined University / County facility. Two years on, in January 2005, the first joint staff session to discuss the objectives of a new joint public and academic library took place. Now six years, and a lot of hard work later the project is coming to the end of the construction phase which has embodied that vision; shared and nurtured by literally hundreds of people along the way, in an inspiring structure, ready to open its doors to the people of Worcestershire and the University community in July 2012

This paper looks at how the project has fared through significant political and economic changes and how the project team have been able to stay true to the original vision, while negotiating the inevitable compromises needed when bringing together five previously separate services.

The two principal partners, from the project's inception, have been the University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council, and the collaboration will bring together: The University Library, The Public Library, The Worcestershire Record Office, The Worcestershire History Centre, The Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service (WHEAS) and the Worcestershire Hub (local government customer service centre). Each service had its own particular reasons for embarking on the journey which has resulted in The Hive, but shared an appreciation of the potential of five information based services coming together to work in close partnership and a degree of established familiarity and trust resulting from the work of the liaison group.

The development also caught the imagination of public funding bodies, attracting £10 m from the HEFCE Strategic Development Fund (£5m grant, £5m interest free loan); £43m in PFI credits from Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS); and £7m from the regional development agency Advantage West Midlands. Funders have not only understood the vision, but see an opportunity to share services across sectors with resulting efficiency gains.

Given the conference focus this paper will concentrate on the library aspects of the Hive but where relevant bring in aspects relating to the other services.

### **Political and social context**

The concept of the Hive developed in 2003, a time of relative optimism and economic stability. Sub-prime mortgages, hedge funds and quantitative easing were not yet part of the vocabulary of global news; and the idea that major international banks could fail, triggering the worst recession since the 1930s, would have been considered inconceivable by most people, including, sadly, most politicians.

In 2009, the DCMS commissioned a paper intended to signal the way for the future - 'The Modernisation Review of Public Libraries: a policy statement'.<sup>1</sup> Based on consultation across the profession, and much delayed, the report finally emerged in March 2010 in one of the last policy documents of the Labour Government, heralded by two much quoted comments from the then Secretary of State, Margaret Hodge:

*"Sleepwalking into the era of the iPhone, the eBook and the Xbox without a strategy," she suggested, "runs the risk of turning the library service into a curiosity of history such as telex machines or typewriters."*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cm7821 Mar. 2010 <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm78/7821/7821.pdf> [accessed 20.10.11]

<sup>2</sup> The Telegraph Online : <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/6699391/Public-libraries-risk-becoming-curiosity-of-history-warns-Margaret-Hodge.html> [accessed 27.10.11]

And this:

*"There is a trend among some librarians that we have to value the traditional library and they are resistant to change."*

It is fair to say that this was greeted with some surprise by most librarians, who looked around at their (mostly) busy libraries, with their cafes, social spaces, computers, and yes, even books, and wondered how the Minister could have failed to notice that the future had already arrived.

There were however, some commitments in the policy which were very welcome at the time, but that have subsequently been swept away in the new economic order.

### **Free access to information**

*"**Proposal 27:** The Government expects that from April 2011 all library services will provide free internet access to users as part of their Library Offer to the public. Government will, under section 8(2)(b) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, make an (affirmative) Order preventing libraries from charging for internet access. DCMS will ensure that there will be no net additional costs to local authorities in line with the Government's new burdens procedures."* (our underlining).

A commitment to ensuring free internet access to all was at the heart of the vision for modernization, to ensure that libraries were able to make a significant contribution to reducing the digital divide: the inequality between those with the advantage of easy access to web information and e-communication, and those people who are disadvantaged without it.

The latest formal survey In January 2010 from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council<sup>3</sup> reported that:

*"Access to the internet is provided entirely free of charge to all library users in four-fifths (79%) of English Library Authorities. Nearly all (91%) offer at least the first hour of use free of charge. A small number of library authorities (4%) offer the first half hour for free, but then make a subsequent charge."*

However, there are signs that some local authorities are now moving away from the concept of free access in response to the tougher financial climate. Last year, Buckinghamshire introduced charges of £1.00 per every 30 minutes of internet access. Calderdale Local Authority is allowing free access for the first hour, thereafter £1.00 per hour or part of an hour.

If this is the beginning of a more widespread approach to revenue generation, then that should be a concern for all those who believe in equality of access to information within the democratic space of a library.

Martha Lane Fox was appointed as the UK Digital Champion in June 2010 by David Cameron. She writes:

*"Half of all those who are offline live in social housing...Forty-four per cent live on a household income of less than 10k a year. And yet our work so far shows that if just 3.5 per cent of those people found work by getting online (we know people are 25 per cent more likely to find work if they use the web) it would contribute more than £200m to the economy."*<sup>4</sup>

Happily, the Hive will not only have many desk top computers and many more lap top spaces, but there will be programmes promoting digital literacy skills of including location and evaluation of high quality information to all users. The information and research skills teaching which underpins so much of the student experience in the university library, will be translated across the whole

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<sup>3</sup> Role of public libraries in supporting and promoting digital participation, January 2010

<sup>4</sup> Financial Times 17 Sept 2011.

community.

*Public Libraries "Proposal 34: Government expects e-books to be loaned for free. Government will under section 8(2)(b) of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, make an (affirmative) Order preventing libraries from charging for e-books lending of any sort including remotely." (our underlining).*

It has always been a fundamental principle of public library provision that books and information is freely available to all. It seems that only applies to print. E-Books are now commonly following DVDs as an income generator.

In June 2010 the new Coalition Government confirmed that the spending commitments of the previous government to the Modernisation Strategy would not be kept, which heralded the beginning of the most radical cuts in public library provision since their enshrinement as a public statutory duty in the Public Libraries Act of 1962.

### **UK Libraries and Public Spending Cuts**

There is wide spread public acknowledgement that hard decisions must be made in a period of economic austerity, and that local authorities have been placed in an extraordinary and unenviable position in responding to the reduction in their financial settlement from central government. In Worcestershire, this is 28% over four years in real terms, and that is not uncommon. As one head of service in another authority commented privately, 'I am now going to be in the position of having to argue for libraries to stay open while services for the elderly, mentally ill, and disadvantaged children are cut. How can I do that?'

In the UK, the picture is bleak. At the time of writing (October 2011) figures highlighted on Public Library News<sup>5</sup> 436 libraries (347 buildings and 89 mobiles) are currently under threat or closed/left council control since 1/4/11 out of c.4612 in the UK, CILIP<sup>6</sup> forecasts 600 libraries under threat (inc. 20% of English libraries). The Public Libraries News figure is obtained from counting up all reports about public libraries in the media each day.

But there is cause for optimism. The threatened and actual closures have opened a national debate about the importance of libraries. Authors such as Philip Pullman, Joanna Trollope, Kate Mosse and Michael Morpurgo to name just four of the many have given their time and public support to those fighting to keep libraries open. In January 2011 Philip Pullman made a deeply felt speech in defence of libraries:

*"I love the public library service for what it did for me as a child and as a student and as an adult. I love it because its presence in a town or a city reminds us that there are things above profit, things that profit knows nothing about, things that have the power to baffle the greedy ghost of market fundamentalism, things that stand for civic decency and public respect for imagination and knowledge and the value of simple delight."*<sup>7</sup>

The debate on the future of libraries has become part of a political, as well as financial debate, as libraries run by volunteers have been heralded as a symbol of David Cameron's Big Society. But as Philip Pullman says

*"Does he think the job of a librarian is so simple, so empty of content, that anyone can step up and do it for a thank-you and a cup of tea? Does he think that all a librarian does is to tidy the shelves? And who are these volunteers? Who are these people whose lives are so empty, whose time spreads out in front of them like the limitless steppes of central Asia, who have no families to look after, no jobs to do, no responsibilities of any sort, and yet are so wealthy that they can commit hours of their time every week to working for nothing? Who are these*

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/> [accessed 20.10.11]

<sup>6</sup> Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals

<sup>7</sup> <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/save-oxfordshire-libraries-speech-philip-pullman> [accessed 20.10.11]

*volunteers? Do you know anyone who could volunteer their time in this way?"<sup>8</sup>*

Even more positively, opposition to the closures is coming from communities themselves. Well known writers, singers and artists might pick up the headlines, but it is unknown people of all ages and class who are joining together to speak out about what libraries mean to them. The Friends of Somerset libraries have made a film, available on YouTube<sup>9</sup>, about how they feel about their library. I commend it to you.

In Gloucestershire, where the resistance to closures has taken the form of legal challenge (which has also happened in a number of other authorities), a leading local Councillor described the legal action as –

*“very frustrating for council taxpayers and community groups at a time when 20 communities have stepped forward with innovative and exciting business plans to take over their local facility”<sup>10</sup>*

This was swiftly contradicted by the community groups themselves, one of whom issued this press statement:

*“We are surprised to note Cllr H...’s comments in response to the court injunction stopping GCC from closing libraries across the county. Lechlade has consistently argued against the closure of our library by the County.....In order to secure a library service for our residents we have reluctantly submitted a bid to take over the library, but hope that this will not be necessary and that the County will be forced, either by the courts, or by the Secretary of State who is currently reviewing the County’s proposals, to maintain the existing service.”*

So an unexpected consequence of economic downturn, and public library closures is an emerging new appreciation of the educational, cultural and social value of libraries. The contribution that libraries make to a civilized society is now part of a new national discourse. And some local authorities are listening.

The London borough of Hillingdon is just over half way through a £4million programme to rebuild or refurbish all its 17 libraries. One library, serving one of the borough’s poorest areas has seen a 101% increase in membership since it was refurbished last year.

In Rotherhithe, in the east end of London, a £14 m new library opens in November 2011, housing 40,000 books, 2,500 films and CDs, a waterside café and a theatre - and offer free wi-fi as well as up to 100 computers.

## **Changes in Higher Education**

It is not just local authorities that have experienced a seismic shift in the last two years. In the early days of Hive development, tuition fees were just £3000, which was widely accepted as a partial contribution to the cost of higher education, with the main funding coming from central government. At that time, there was a moral argument to be made about communities having access to resources for which they had paid through taxes, as well as an educational and social rationale.

First year students in September 2012 will be paying anything from £6000 pa to £9000 pa for their degree courses in the UK, with many coming in at over £8000 pa. At the University of Worcester, most undergraduates will be paying £8,100 pa. The new funding arrangements mean that students will not pay the fees until after they leave university and are earning in excess of £21,000. They will then pay 9% of their income. Under a "progressive tapering" system, the interest rate will rise from just inflation (RPI) for incomes of £21,000, to 3% plus inflation for incomes above £41,000. Interest of inflation plus 3% will be charged while the student is studying.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5UTxZ3rTTs> [accessed 20.10.11]

<sup>10</sup> <http://foclibrary.wordpress.com/2011> [accessed 20.10.11]

The Government position is that this is an equitable and necessary solution to the problem of sustainable funding for higher education. They appear confident that students from lower income families will not be deterred from entering higher education, through a number of measures to ensure that Universities continue to invest in widening access, including scholarships, fee remission and bursaries.

The implications for the Hive are that we have had to think very carefully about how we remain faithful to the original vision, while acknowledging that the times are very different. Students (and their financial supporters) may have a more consumerist approach to their use of the university library. There may be a feeling that sharing a library with the public dilutes their experience and access to resources. There may be a desire for exclusivity, rather than sharing; a sense that paying fees entitles you to a dedicated space and service to which others are excluded.

This is something that we have to prepare for, and to be very positive in articulating not only the values behind the concept of the Hive, but the depth and range of experiences and opportunities that the Hive can offer students – far beyond what is usually experienced in a conventional university library.

These include opportunities to work with children, literacy, and reading in one of the largest children's libraries in the UK, and the only public children's library in which a University has a 50% share; the community cultural programme; opportunities for volunteering on skills and educational programmes in the Hive to increase employability as well as paid employment; access to regional businesses through the Business Centre; the embedding in the undergraduate curriculum of a unique historic resource in the Worcestershire records and archives and in the archaeology service.

When asked by JISC in their 2009 film "Libraries of the Future"<sup>11</sup> how she would characterize the academic library of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Sarah Thomas, Bodleian Librarian and Director of Oxford University Library Services said:

*"The physical library of the future will look like a beehive...its all about creating a sense of community and excitement about the discovery of ideas. You have the transparency so people can see and be seen, you have spaces where people can actually have conversations together..." and a student said in the response to the same question, "a communal space...sharing of ideas..."*

We believe that the Hive is exactly that, and the comments in the film encourage us in our redefinition of a university library. The University is entering this partnership with a vision of public engagement, inclusion and access, but we cannot expect students to see the Hive in that way. We have to ensure that the intellectual engagement, educational experience, services and facilities enhance their university experience, in ways that students really appreciate and endorse.

### **Shared Values – Different perspectives**

How has the project itself fared in charting a course through this changing political and economic climate? We believe the answer is very well. This is in large part due to a strong sense of shared purpose, kindled at the start, then strengthened through trust and a close and open working relationship

It is fair to say that in the early days of the project when the vision was being developed along with the business case and design statement, the focus of the project team was on the similarities exhibited by the services. This common ground exhibited itself in three principal areas: a commitment to excellent customer service; a commitment to high quality education and a strong focus on information based services. It was not that the differences were unappreciated or being ignored, but rather that they were not considered to be insurmountable given the belief in the project and the political will (with both a large and small 'P') in evidence at the time. However, it is equally fair to say that now, only eight months from opening, the focus has shifted squarely onto those differences be they reflected in either,

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjoJd\\_uN-7M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjoJd_uN-7M) [accessed 20.10.11]

policies and procedures or perspectives on how best to meet our customer's needs; and that the negotiations to resolve these issues are also taking place within the much changed economic and political climate that we all now live in.

As illustrations of the challenges of harmonising the different service cultures and practices within a shared values framework we will look at two areas: the development of the vision for the Hive and ensuring staff buy in; and how we are ensuring that both university and public users of library services will receive enhanced services and not lose out through competition with each other.

Early in the design process, arising out of the first round of meetings between university and county council colleagues, a vision developed which was encapsulated by the phrase "*Shared Vision – Single Community*", supported by a set of ten key values:

- Inspiration
- Connection
- Aspiration
- Learning
- Integration
- Inclusivity
- Enduring Values
- Well-being
- Sustainability
- Visibility

Each of these values was expanded in a detailed design statement, which was at the core of the documentation given to the competing consortia at the start of the procurement process.

The values have been a touchstone throughout the development and have provided a focus for continuity as staff have joined and left the project over its lifetime. It was recognised that the combined staffs of the partner services would have to fully commit to this vision and its associated values if the potential for value added service delivery was to be realised. To this end the Staffing and Volunteering workstream<sup>12</sup> has developed a combined staff development programme with the objective that –

*“... by the time of opening, there will be a sense of being one integrated staff body with shared values and commitment to the vision of the Hive and a clear customer focus”<sup>13</sup>*

In order to lay a solid foundation for the later parts of the programme a series of workshops were held in January & February 2010 to engage staff with the project's vision and values by giving them the opportunity to interpret them in a way that was meaningful to them. This programme and its outcomes have been more fully reported elsewhere<sup>14</sup>, but the stated objectives of the workshops were:

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- 1) *“To provide an opportunity for front line staff to contribute to the development of service standards for the new Worcester Library and History Centre.*
- 2) *To help staff appreciate the importance of shared values in service delivery.*
- 3) *To give staff the opportunity to learn, informally, something about other services that will be in the new building.*
- 4) *To allow staff from different workplaces to meet in a relaxed environment and get to know each other.*

*The output from these workshops would be the staffs' own ideas about shared values that could be developed by the workstream and then forwarded to the Service Development Board with the*

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<sup>12</sup> The Staffing and Volunteering Workstream is one of about a dozen workstreams established to progress the various aspects of the project, under the overall management of a “Service development Board”.

<sup>13</sup> This is taken from the first part of Staffing and Volunteering workstream's vision statement.

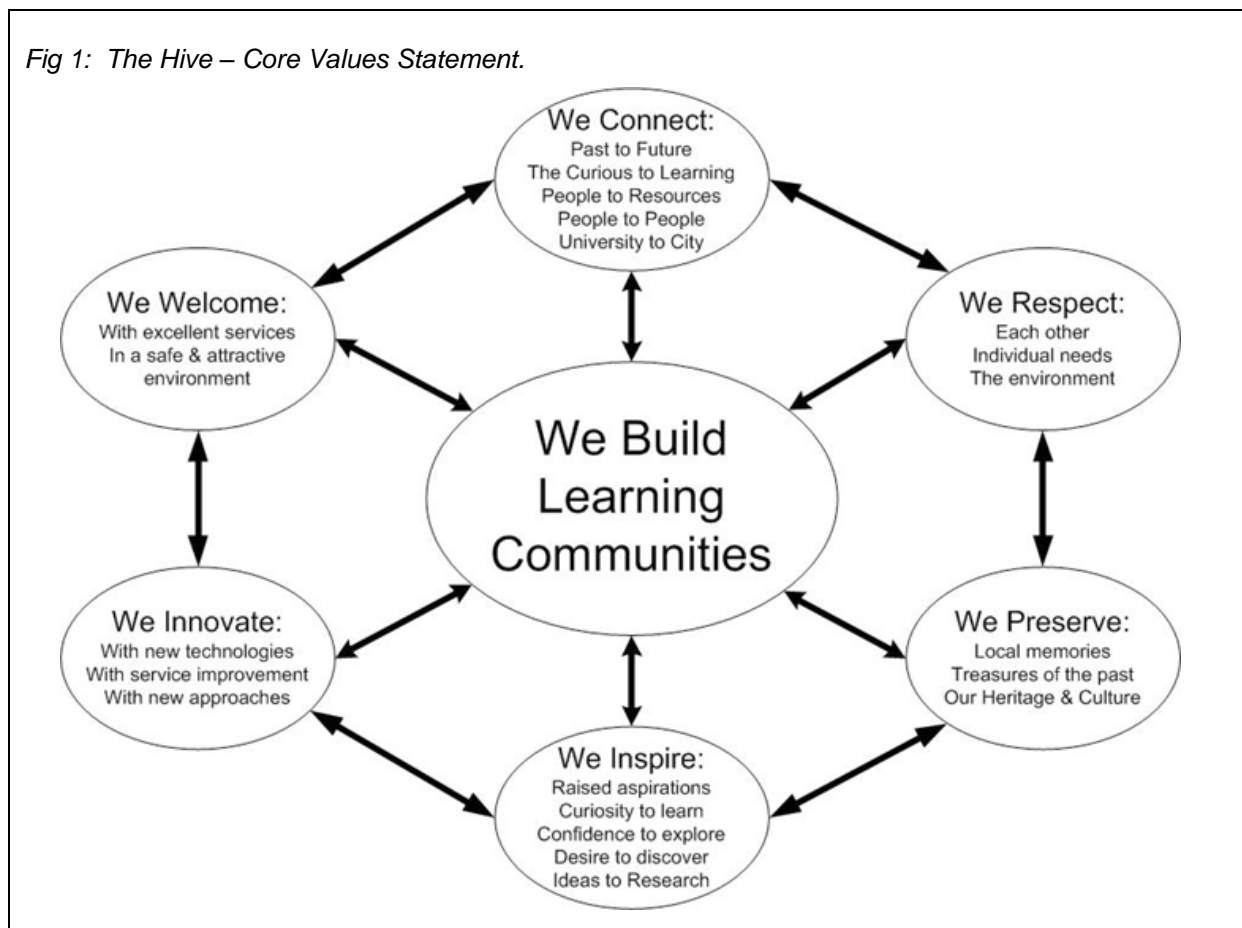
<sup>14</sup> Keene, J & Fairman, R (2010) Building an Integrated Workforce through shared values: the Worcester Library & History Centre. *Library Review*, 60 (3&4), 188 - 201



recommendation that they be adopted for use in future recruitment and staff development activity related to the WLHC.”<sup>15</sup>

Feedback from the participants indicated that the workshops had met their objectives. As part of that feedback the participants were asked what would make them feel that their views had been acted upon, the number of responses was limited but they agreed that a written values statement based on their views would be valuable. As a result the chart shown in Fig.1. was developed, directly from the workshop outcomes, by the workstream members and approved by the Service Development Board within a couple of months of the workshops taking place.

Fig 1: The Hive – Core Values Statement.



This statement of core values is now regularly used in staff training and recruitment by both the University and the County Council and staff can see their own contributions being valued and used.

In addition to the core values themselves, the interactions between staff at the workshops had other benefits. One of these was staff beginning to address some of the differences between the ways services were delivered within the supportive context provided by the values framework.

For example, for some time, there had been a realisation on the part of the workstream members that staff on both sides were not totally at ease with the others approach to reference / enquiry work. This took the form of some university staff feeling they would be spending their time being asked for the answer to “14 across” while equally some public library staff were apprehensive about answering “erudite” questions from students and academics. In addition both were uncertain about what questions they might have to deal with as a result of the Record Office, Archaeology Service and Customer Service Hub being in the same building. There was also a tension between whether in response to any given enquiry, staff should provide “the answer” or show the enquirer “how to find the

<sup>15</sup> )Ibid. p192

*answer*". This was a critical issue, as a fundamental part of the role of a university librarian is to work with students to develop their skills of critical enquiry and research competency.

In response to this another programme of workshops was devised with the objective of familiarising staff with the range of enquiry work carried out by all the partner services, sharing skills, and beginning to lay the foundations for a framework within which all enquiries received by front line staff in the Hive could be handled and where appropriate referred on to more specialist staff. The starting point for these workshops was the core values, specifically:

- **We Welcome** – with excellent services
- **We Innovate** – with new approaches
- **We Respect** – each other[‘s specialisms]

The workshops revolved around group work based on participants discussing how they would go about attempting to answer a diverse range of enquiries selected from lists of actual enquiries received by the different services. Anyone in a group from the service from which the enquiry originated was requested to stand back from the discussions initially and let the others consider how they would handle it, before joining in and explaining how the enquiry would have been originally dealt with.

The outcomes included:

- the dispelling of some “urban myths” around different sets of customers and the enquiries they generate,
- a greater appreciation of the skill sets exhibited by different staff and the degree to which they either overlapped or complimented each other, and
- an agreement that a “knowledge base” could be a useful tool that would aid in answering many enquiries, without detracting from the value placed on the specialisms of professional staff (this is now being developed using a template originating from the Customer Service Centre).

A positive approach was taken by all the participants to these workshops. The confidence shown by staff in being able to debate differing practices in a challenging but supportive manner came (we believe) from the fact that the discussions were within the context of a set of values that they themselves had established. The foundations built during the workshops are continually being developed and each element of the staff training programme, organised by the Staffing & Volunteering Workstream is linked to at least one of the core values.

As well Visions and Values, the project is having to come to grips with an extremely diverse range of practical issues to do with service delivery. But it is perhaps here that the sense of shared vision and values, together with the high degree of trust developed over six years of working closely together is paying dividends, as decisions are having to be made in a very different political and economic climate than that in which the project team started their shared journey.

There are many areas where the potential for disagreement between the partners has been moderated by this shared sense of purpose, and while there have been some occasions where forthright and robust discussions have taken place, workable compromises have always resulted and good working relationships maintained. Examples include the relative priority given to ‘back of house’ vs. ‘front of house’ services; some aspects of how the Dewey system is applied & interpreted; charges for DVDs etc.; the degree of filtering applied to the internet; the layout & allocation of office space and the need for explicit behaviour management policies.

Another such area, as highlighted earlier in the paper, is the degree to which the university community needs assurances that their interests were not being eroded by making the book collections available to a much wider audience. These tensions were always there but have been considerably heightened with the changes in funding of higher education. The vision of the Hive was for a totally integrated library, where users would be unaware of the provenance of the resources at their disposal and with common rights of access. We still aspire to this; however some compromise has been essential. The approach taken has been to creatively use the functionality of the Library Management System (LMS) to control the way the book stock is circulated, maximising student access to key and high demand

texts, while still allowing the public much greater access to the university collections than under previous arrangements.

The university currently operates with a 'Key text Not for loan' collection (1200 volumes interfiled with the main collection), a 4 hour loan collection (2000 volumes filed separately), and a main collection with a loan period of two weeks (approx 120,000 volumes); while the Public Library operates a single collection with a loan period of three weeks. The Hive will operate with the circulation Parameters shown in Table 1

| <i>Table 1 The Hive Circulation Parameters</i>                                                                                                                                                                             |                             |                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>University access</b>    | <b>Public access</b>        |
| <b>University Course Collection</b><br>Essential texts as defined on module reading lists (6000 – 8000 volumes)                                                                                                            | 3 items<br>24 hour loan     | Reference only              |
| <b>Two week loan Collection</b><br>University High Demand Items as defined by circulation statistics. (approximately 30,000 volumes)<br><br>This will be interfiled with the main collection, identified with a blue band. | 12 items<br>Two week loan   | 1 item<br>Two week loan     |
| <b>Main Loan Collection</b><br>Remainder of university stock (80,000 – 90,000 volumes plus public library stock)                                                                                                           | 12 items<br>Three week loan | 12 items<br>Three week loan |

This retains the principle that all users should have access to all of the stock, while explicitly acknowledging the priority access students have to the key material for their studies. Conversely as the public library fiction collection is three week loan university members receive exactly the same allocation as everyone else, and do not receive an additional advantage in this area as a consequence of their priority access to key texts.

It also avoids undue complexity, for while the LMS is capable of supporting a much greater number of variables, for example allowing the public a greater number of two week loans during the summer vacation, it was felt that this would lead to confusion amongst users.

Another change resulting from the integration is that the University has dropped the differentiation between staff and students, staff previously receiving more generous allocations. The reasons behind this change are twofold; firstly as a consequence of the way the LMS can be configured both staff and students would receive a higher allocation as the allocations for the different collections is cumulative, and secondly removing the distinction meant the public library colleagues were more at ease with the level of equality between staff and users.

There are other parallel sets of discussions in progress around access to different types of resource. One centres on the materials available in the children's Library and involves:

- The aspiration to have children, trainee teachers & practicing teachers using a shared resource
- The particular requirements of trainee teachers on teaching practice
- Issues arising from the recent rise in academy schools, where as a result of government policy schools can gain financial independence from the local authority.

A second involves the realm of virtual resources, e-books, e-journals and other electronically delivered materials. We have had successful discussions with suppliers, facilitated by JISC<sup>16</sup>, which have established that current licensing arrangements will allow 'walk-in' access for the public to most university subscribed journal and database content. However the position with e-books is less clear and in any case the form of licence currently held by the university, often single simultaneous user, means that, as with the high demand printed texts, access will very probably need to be restricted to the university community.

It should be remembered that in determining these circulation arrangements we are seeking to satisfy perceptions as much as reality. The truth is we know little of what pressure there will actually be on course materials once the public has greater access. It is likely to vary between subjects; less in Nursing and Midwifery?, more in Business and Art? We will just not know until the building has opened and the first six months curiosity factor has worked its way through. However access to key texts is a topic that is of concern to students now and their assumption is likely to be that allowing the public access is going to make it worse. To achieve what we believe is the potential of this collaboration, we will have to ensure that we clearly communicate; strongly promote the wider opportunities the Hive will offer; and be prepared to respond swiftly to changes in demand.

## Conclusion

Is it a model for other universities and local authorities? The answer is not clear cut. An initiative like the Hive has to be rooted in the strategic direction of both partners. For example, a university that did not have inclusion and public engagement at its heart, would be unlikely to welcome this integrated proposition; while a public authority that did not value the powerful potential of libraries for education and community empowerment would simply not see the point.

While the Hive could be seen as a flagship for a number of government agendas, not least efficiency and shared services, it would be a great mistake for politicians and administrators to see this as an opportunity to save money. On the contrary, further investment from both partners has been required, but with the outcome of significantly enhanced services and access hours for all.

There is always debate in the professional press to predict the library of the future. The demise of the book, the decline in the need for librarians in a digital information world, and the questioning of the need for a building called a library re-occurs regularly.

This is not the place to refute each point in detail, but the Hive stands as a testimony to our continued belief in the need for the facilities and services provided all types of library.

The space for the printed word as well as the electronic demonstrates our belief in the value of the physical relationship with 'the book'. The e-reader will not replace the printed book for the same reasons that television did not replace radio and DVD has not replaced the cinema. It might reach different audiences, be used for different purposes, but each has a value.

In writing for an audience of (mostly) librarians, we probably do not need to elaborate on the continuing importance of librarians in a digital information world....while those who question the need

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<sup>16</sup> The Joint Information System Committee

for a space and a building forget that learning is a social as well as an individual activity, and that the earliest academic libraries were built around communities of scholars who ate, worked, and talked together, sharing ideas and creating new knowledge and understanding.

Six years ago the project team, for what was then known as the Worcester Library & History Centre, took inspiration from the Martin Luther King Jr. library in San Jose. We now hope that the Hive will provide inspiration both to the many communities it aims to serve within the region & beyond and to anyone thinking of setting out on a similarly challenging project.