
TRANSFORMING LIBRARY SERVICES AT LEYTON SFC– MIRNA PEACH, HEAD OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND CO-CHAIR COLRIC, LEYTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Leyton Sixth Form College (LSC) serves a vibrant, culturally diverse and challenging area of east London. The college is committed to widening participation and to supporting progression to higher education and apprenticeships. Students follow a range of study programmes including a blend of linear and modular A levels and Level 3 BTEC courses. We also have a large Learning Support department that teaches ESOL and Level 1 courses and an Aim High Programme for students wishing to progress to Russell Group universities or competitive Apprenticeships.

With all this in mind, The Library at Leyton aims to provide support and increase engagement for all students regardless of academic aptitude, level of learning or learning difficulties. For us there should be no barrier to accessing information and the Library team works hard to ensure that it reaches every department by liaising with programme areas to develop resources that are right for them, and facilitating reading groups and curriculum support directly related to student needs.

Our inclusive outreach programme has become successful in encouraging students to use all resources available to them and enabling us to develop relevant resources by working directly with programme areas to help students achieve. It has also been useful in building mutually beneficial working arrangements with local Public Libraries.

Getting to where we are now has been a journey of sorts. When I took up my role, initially as Library Manager, I was daunted by the scale of the area (two floors), the numbers of students

using the space (hundreds), the noise (so much noise) and in particular the fact that the Library seemed to be a stand-alone space, a place for students to hang out, for student groups to gather, eat lunch and chill. Team members were stressed and suspicious of yet another Manager coming in. The previous one, who had left after a few months, was followed by an interim Manager who had not made a great impression on the service or the team. The Library did not reach out to Programme Areas and I imagine that academic staff did not venture much into the place at all.

To be honest, the Library seemed to be in utter chaos, and I gave myself six months. I felt the same stress the team felt and was unsure whether I could pull this off.

The first thing I tackled was student behaviour. I started my job mid-year, so this was not an easy thing to do. But I felt it was the most important thing to start with as I needed the team on side quickly. Dealing with behaviour, and therefore stress seemed to be a good first step.



Student Mentor/Library Ambassador recruitment

I designated specific working areas. The hub, a huge room housing eighty-five computers, was to become a silent study area. A group working area was allocated as well as two group working rooms and the upstairs remained a silent individual study space. A Code of Conduct was developed and placed on the logon screens. I envisaged a two-year cycle for behaviour to be properly embedded into the area. Initially there were a lot of issues around resistance, rudeness, defiance, groups ganging up and so on. But with a zero-tolerance approach, the team felt that they were re-gaining some control of the space. There was a lot of banning from the area as well, with return to area meetings with me before exclusions were lifted. It did take two years before the Library became a calm and safe place for all students to use. Our learning walks help to maintain the ambiance we created, and they also enable us to engage with the students and support them with their work. Building relationships with the students in this way helped to break down the 'us and them' mentality for both students and

staff. Keeping on top of behaviour management is a top priority now and has full buy in from staff and (most) students.

I next wanted to focus on how the Library interfaced with the wider college and academic colleagues. We already had study skills provision and employed Graduate Trainees to teach these alongside University Mentors to support students with specific subjects, but we needed to encourage more collaboration and support for learning resource services across the organisation.

What follows are just a few ways we managed to do this.

1. Moodle

We took over our own Library Moodle Pages. We created a Library Moodle Page for each subject and linked these to the course pages. We included links to the subject specification and added E-book links also. We organised all subject pages in the same way

- Information on where to find the physical books in the Library
- Links to E-book provision
- Links to online resources
- Links to relevant websites
- Wider reading – linked to our LMS for immediate borrowing/reserving
- Links to exemplar papers

The screenshot shows a Moodle page titled 'Business' under the 'Learning Resources' section. The page layout includes a left sidebar with 'Quick Links' (Search Catalogue, Online Resources, E-books, FAQs, Study Skills) and 'E-book of the month' (STEC Level 2 Business Book 3). The main content area has a 'Books' section with a list of useful numbers for books for Business: 330 — Economics, 657 — Accounting, and 658 — Business. Below this is an 'Online Resources' section featuring COBRA. The right sidebar contains 'Navigation', 'Administration', and 'Course Specification' sections. The 'Business Courses' table is as follows:

Subject	Course code	Course specification
Business yr1	2792	STEC L3 Diploma ➤ Business 1/1
Business yr2	2778	STEC L3 Extended Diploma ➤ Business

Business Studies Library Page

The screenshot displays a social media feed on the left side of the screen, featuring tweets from Leyton Sixth Form Library and Waltham Forest Council. The tweets include announcements about award winners, library events, and election information. On the right side, the library website is visible, featuring sections for 'The World Bank', 'E-books', 'Useful Websites', and 'Reading List'. The 'E-books' section includes a link to open e-books, and the 'Reading List' section lists various resources related to the subject.

By doing this, we managed to connect the Library with Programme Areas – virtually.

2. Programme Area meetings and the Subject Librarian

The Library team began to actively take part in college life, joining clubs and societies so that they could build communication with teaching and support staff. I cannot underestimate the importance of this vital step. I assigned each member of staff to a Programme Area and they met with them, not always successfully mind you, but they persisted. My aim was to encourage programme areas to include the Library within their Improvement Actions plans, and therefore their Self-Assessment Reports so these meetings were like fishing expeditions for us. Although we had links to the subject specifications we really wanted to find out how each subject area had used the Library previously, what they might find helpful going forward, to encourage them to pop down to see their subject stock, to let them know what services we can provide for them. Future meetings centred on demonstrating the online resources, highlighting the e-books available and so on. The Programme Areas were finally able to put a face to the name and gradually we saw a thawing of attitudes (from both sides).

3. New student Inductions and Waltham Forest Libraries

Each year we close off the library to carry out inductions for our new students. We highlight the resources and services that are available and show them how useful some of these resources are for their subjects. We talk to them about the importance of wider reading, and about behaviour expectations within the Library and around the College. We introduce them to the Library and Study Skills team as well as the university mentors. We also sign them up to Waltham Forest Public Libraries so they can access further online resources (fiction and non-fiction). Working with the public libraries benefits us in two ways. Firstly, we have managed to save thousands of pounds by utilising the resources offered for free from Public Libraries. Secondly, we have made vital connections with the community and are now building on these by developing an inter library loans service between us and Waltham Forest Libraries. These books, once borrowed, are delivered to us by them for the students, and they are then notified when they have been returned for pick up. Going forward, the plan is to create study spaces for our students within the public libraries. At present the spaces are not configured in such a way as to allow that. Waltham Forest Public Libraries benefit from this as well. They gain approximately one thousand three hundred new members annually just from the College. Not bad statistics!

4. Study skills and the Study Skills Programme

Having managed to raise our profile and improve our reputation across the college, my next step was to focus on the expertise, knowledge and skills of the library team. With retirements coming up and some contracts ending, I was very lucky to have the opportunity to recruit new blood and highly skilled individuals to work across the Library and The Study. The Study is where we support students either on a one to one basis or in small groups. Students can book sessions with our university mentors, teachers, study skills assistants, or they can walk in for immediate subject support. Teachers can also make referrals for their students if they feel they might need additional help and advice. It's also where we create our workshops which are then delivered in classrooms or online. Our subject support goes across all academic and BTEC subjects from ESOL to L3. Our support portfolio includes proof reading, UCAS applications and all information literacy skills including academic writing, essay structure, critical evaluation and thinking. Our Study Skills and Library Assistants develop study skills materials for all subjects at all levels. They teach these study skills in classes, and are called upon to deliver lessons on referencing, structuring essays, planning and research. But honestly, the lessons can be about anything the teacher wishes. We make sure that what we teach is relevant to what the students are currently studying within their lessons. Ensuring that we are subject specific adds context and makes it meaningful. We have a big presence for EPQ and Health and Social Care subjects, but last year we managed to support every subject, at every level. Full kudos to the team! We have extended our provision further by creating Level 1 to Level 3 Study skills programme which rolled out to year 1 students in their tutorials. Such a crucial part of their education is to learn to be independent-thinking learners, and the Library has a big part to play in that. We have built on this by creating the Academic Skills Certificate, an online programme of ten key modules with multiple choice questions. Students can print off their

own certificates if they have managed to achieve 90% accuracy in their answers. This year we also supplemented the Summer Tasks programme by creating relevant study skills for the tasks, and following that we created an Excel Skills course, popular with the Maths Department as it is essential for A Level Maths. The team remain open to creating other resources! Study skills have started to become embedded in teaching and learning, and we are now seeing the Library included in departmental improvement plans.



Main Library Landing page with links to online courses

5. University Mentors, Student Mentors, Library Ambassador Programme and The Showcase Magazine

They are invaluable additions to our team. Without them we would not be able to do half the stuff we do. Our university mentors are ex-students of the College who have gone on to university but have stayed in London. They are brilliant! They are high achievers, know the subject spec, understand our students and just 'get it'. They work within The Study, supporting a steady stream of students and have helped increase the grades of many who have previously struggled. They help us with UCAS applications and teach study skills in lessons. In addition, we have current student mentors, who we hope to employ once they have gone on to university. From October-December 2019, 329 study appointments were made, and 46 workshops were taught. Our Library Ambassadors support us with all things to do with displays, shelving, processing and have also supported local secondary schools (Year 7 and 8) with reading. It is fabulous work experience for them. We have a team of student editors who work on the Library Magazine, *The Showcase*. Again, without them we would not be able to publish it. The magazine contains articles and artwork created by the students for the students and raises awareness of issues that affect them.



Heated discussions for The Showcase

The students are rewarded with V-Inspired certificates for volunteering and have something fantastic to put on their UCAS or job applications.

6. Our Reading Programmes and Homework Clubs and more!

If the above wasn't enough, we have also developed Wider Reading Programmes for our Aim High students and Homework Clubs for those more hard-to-reach students who would not normally visit the library. We also facilitate a staff academic reading group.

Our Wider Reading Programme has been trialled within the Humanities area and has proved to be very popular with the students and staff. We also have reading groups within the Library. Our Homework Clubs are aimed at students studying sports. We sit with them in their area and help them put their work together. The upside is that they now come into the Library to find us for more support. The team is extremely passionate about issues such as feminism and have facilitated a women's workshop to discuss key issues and to help spread good practice around the college. They have held lots of events, one of which last year was on International Women's Day.

7. Be Political

By that I mean the Library is not your space, it belongs to the College. Loan it out for events, exams. Let it become part of the very fabric of the college. Believe me, this helps us to stay relevant and very much a part of what is going on.

From a management perspective, the most important thing I can say is that library and learning resource teams need to be encouraged to develop in their own way, whilst still

reflecting the interests and strengths of every colleague. Enabling this to happen has been brilliant for us. It has allowed staff to take ownership of their activities and projects and succeed in a way that would have been very different if it had been more prescriptive. Being proactive and responsive to the needs of the college has earned us positive recognition from the Senior Leadership Team and Ofsted.

'Learners receive very good support with their learning from teachers, learning support assistants, library staff and mentors' LSC Ofsted Report 2016

We are always updating everyone on our activities, so if you haven't yet please follow us on [@Leyton6thLib](#) on Twitter.