2016-17 has been a year of transformation in Library Services. We have completed a major reorganisation of the service, creating three teams – Academic & Research Services, Information & User Services and Student Engagement & Learning Support – and we have made some important changes to our services in order to improve the user experience across all three campuses.

The creation of the Library Advisory Group (LAG) has provided a unique forum for partnership with both students and academic staff, generating a range of ideas and helping us anticipate and respond to the changing needs of our users. Work to improve the library environment has included opening a brand new Library & IT facility at the Loughton campus and a major refurbishment of the popular 24/7 Library Reading Room at Colchester. The year ended on a very positive note with a NSS Q19 response of 90.2%, placing Library Services at Essex in 23rd place out of 124 UK university library services, an increase of 12 places on 2016.
STUDENT SUCCESS AND LEARNING SUPPORT

Supporting student success is central to everything we do and this year we have collaborated with the Talent Development Centre to support information skills development in a number of taught modules and to deliver a workshop series as part of the wider academic skills and digital literacy agenda. Library workshops included ‘Finding and evaluating information’, ‘Referencing made easy’ and Reference management software’. Library Services also led the development and implementation of a new Referencing Policy for the university, designed to simplify access to online support for students, and we have made significant progress towards embedding IL skills for undergraduates, especially within Biological Sciences, Essex Pathways and the new School of Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Science. Subject Librarians have contributed specialist support for Capstone projects, providing both group talks and one to one support via the ‘Book a Librarian’ service.

Following the implementation of RFID technology at the Albert Sloman Library in summer 2016 self-service for borrowing went live in October 2016 and by December 97% of routine transactions were carried out using the self-service kiosks. We were the first academic library in the UK to introduce ‘smallest branch’ self-service cabinets for short loan, enabling students to have access to heavily used reading list material without the need for staff intervention. These developments have released more time for staff to become involved in information literacy and student engagement activities and to provide more visible ‘roving’ support throughout the library. Our ‘Simpler, Fairer, Quicker’ (SFQ) initiative introduced an extended standard loan period of 12 weeks, with unlimited borrowing and the abolition of fines for overdue books, with the exception of high demand items. A review of the changes resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback, except on one change to our recalls policy, which was immediately reversed.

As a result of student feedback we introduced a ‘noise line’ in the Albert Sloman Library, enabling users to text library staff to report problems. We also implemented an out of hours chat service ‘Libchat’ to deal with enquiries ranging from opening hours to advice on databases and library resources during library closed periods.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Much has been done in the past year to forge closer links with the Research Enterprise Office (REO) and the UK Data Archive (UKDA) and to begin to develop new services for researchers. Activities have included hosting events in the Library - for example, the UKDA Data Bites series of workshops and REO Grant Writing workshops - and initiating and facilitating the Proficio ‘Shut up and write’ sessions for PGRs during summer 2017. The developing partnership between the Library, REO and UKDA has enabled us to plan a joint training week for postgraduate students and early career researchers to be held in January 2018. From October 2017 a new post, the Scholarly Communications and Research Support Manager, will lead the development of library research support services.
CONTENT AND COLLECTIONS

This year we launched a new ‘one stop’ digital content delivery service which includes a digitisation service and automatic CLA reporting of scanned content for module readings, removing the burden of manual scanning and reporting for ITS and academic colleagues. 2016/17 has also seen the further development of our new search and discovery tool, Encore, and the wider adoption of TALIS reading lists, which was introduced at Southend this year. Senate’s approval of the Equal Access to Learning Support Task and Finish Group recommendations included a recommendation that academic staff work with the Library in 17/18 to extend use of TALIS to all departments as one of the university’s ‘big four’ e learning technologies.

Some new subscriptions have enhanced access and availability of e content this year – for example the Library now provides Browzine, which brings together scholarly e-journals from a range of publishers and platforms and presents them in a browsable format, allowing the user to create their own ‘Bookshelf’ of favourite titles via an app. We have also been able to purchase the SAGE Humanities and Social Sciences journal back file and SAGE Videos for SAGE Research Methods, both of which are significant additions to our content and will be of enormous benefit to researchers in the Social Sciences in particular.
Major additions this year have included archival material relating to the SDP from Lord and Lady Goodhart, the library of the Bibliographical Society and the papers of Professor Anthony King (1934-1917), Professor of Government, University of Essex, 1969-2017. The university's photographic archive is now available online following a successful digitisation project undertaken by one of our graduate interns.

The Special Collections reading room has been used for a range of activities this year, including undergraduate teaching with special collections material, student engagement activities, and as a focus for university open day visitors, displaying some of our library treasures. We have also begun a new partnership with Essex County Record Office conservation services, benefits of which include staff training on the care of archival materials and conservation work to help preserve some of our most treasured items.

During 2016/17 we showcased our special collections and archives in three exhibitions:

- September 2016, The **Colchester Medical Society, 1774-2016**, which included books from the Society’s library (held in the Albert Sloman Library) and surgical instruments and equipment from the Society’s wider collection.

- March to June 2017, **Sophie In Her Own Words**, co-curated with photographer Ania Ready. Papers from the Library’s Gaudier-Brzeska collection, documenting the life of Sophie Brzeska (1871-1925) were displayed alongside photographs taken in locations where Sophie had lived and worked.

- July to October 2017, **Reformation 500**, highlighting rare theological works by Luther, Calvin and Zwingli from the Library’s Special Collections, in particular the Harsnett Collection.
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In response to the ever growing demand for high quality learning spaces we have continued to develop and improve the physical environment in our libraries. A brand new Library and IT facility opened at the Loughton campus in July 2017, providing a modern study environment with a mix of formal and informal study spaces, fixed PCs, a film viewing area and increased capacity for book stock. The new space also offers self service facilities and extended term time opening hours.

The remodelled ground floor lobby area of the Albert Sloman Library, which opened in October 2017, was well received by students, providing self-service facilities in an open and welcoming entrance area. We were able to further improve library facilities at Colchester with the installation of AV equipment for training and presentations in one of our large group study rooms and in the smaller PG training room, and the addition of 30 new fixed PCs.

A major refurbishment of the 24 hour Library Reading Room commenced in June 2017 with an expected finish date of September 2017. The upgraded room includes a dual use training room/student PC room, and modern individual study spaces equipped with desk top power points and comfortable seating.

Given the many changes in the physical learning environment in recent years and the continuing demand for traditional quiet study spaces alongside noisier collaborative study space, we have engaged directly with library users to look at codes of conduct and acceptable behaviour in the library and across the campuses, including the Silberrad Student Centre and the new Library/IT Centre at Loughton. We are also working with the SU to pilot ‘zoning’ in the Albert Sloman Library in order to better manage the needs and expectations of library users and we are continuing with our UX research to better understand how our spaces are being used.

ENGAGEMENT

October 2016 saw the launch of the new Library Advisory Group. The group, which includes staff and student representatives and is open to all, met on four occasions with an average attendance of 30 at each session. Three of the four meetings took the form of themed workshops on ‘Time and Space’, a review of ‘Simpler, Fairer, Quicker’ and understanding researcher needs. The fourth meeting was an open forum for library users. Ideas and proposals generated at these meetings have fed into a number of projects, including planning for the Library Reading Room refurbishment, the review of borrowing rules, joint planning for a ‘Research Week’ and library hosted events for early career researchers.

A range of other student engagement activities ran throughout the year, including a World Book Day event highlighting ‘hidden treasures’ of the library and the popular ‘Blind Date with a Book’ stall. During the summer revision and exam period the library’s ‘take a break’ space proved popular, as did the supervised silent study space and the ‘revise together’ spaces provided in group study rooms. Students have been invited to leave their own messages for the library and for other students through a variety of means, with Christmas and Easter message trees, the use of whiteboards to gather feedback and a ‘worry box’ during exams. All of these activities have been designed to develop a sense of belonging and ownership of the library space.

This year we collaborated with the Lakeside Theatre to organise the first of a series of free public events, ‘Words with…A. L. Kennedy’, an entertaining evening with the award winning novelist and stand-up comedian. In March the Albert Sloman Library also hosted the children’s Mini Book Festival, part of the Essex Book Festival, and we have continued to welcome open day visitors to view the treasures of our Special Collections throughout the year.

At Southend members of the Library team worked with Southend Borough Council and South Essex College to organise a ‘Fun Palace’ event at the Forum in October 2017 and provided support for the borough’s 2017 Summer Reading Challenge.
PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Library Services continues to work in partnership with a range of colleagues and stakeholders to help deliver an outstanding user experience and excellent support services for our academic staff and students. This year we have worked with the Talent Development Centre, TEL & ITS teams to develop training and support for digital literacy and to contribute to consultation on the University's digital creative and cultural strategy, with specific reference to digital skills development and the library's cultural capital, our collections and archives.

Partnership work with the SU has been particularly rewarding as we have developed shared communications on key issues and policies and have been able to develop new initiatives originating with the Library Advisory Group. The Library also contributed to Essex Crown, publicising daily riddles on our Twitter feed, creating an activity for The Quest and helping to judge The Exhibition.

STAFF

As a result of the Library reorganisation a number of staff were promoted or recruited into new senior roles, including Ross Whitley as Collections Manager and Emma Wisher as Student Engagement and Learning Support Manager. A new Senior Library Assistant role was created at Southend, reflecting the increased demand for student support there, and the new post of Core Resources Co-ordinator was created to support the development of digital content for reading lists.

Two members of Library staff, Greg Bennett and Ai Gooch, were awarded Fellowship of the HEA in 2017 and Greg Cadge was nominated and shortlisted for the national LILAC Information Literacy Award.

Professional activities:

A number of senior staff presented at professional conferences, including:

- Greg Bennett at NAG (National Acquisitions Group) Annual Conference, Glasgow, September 2016
- Ai Gooch and Esther Wilkinson at LILAC (Librarians Information Literacy Annual Conference), Liverpool, April 2017
- Emma Wisher at UXLibs III, Glasgow, June 2017
- Cathy Walsh at OCLC EMEA Regional Meeting in Berlin, February 2017

Caroline Checkley, EIUG committee member, contributed to the organisation and delivery of the EIUG (Innovative Interfaces user group) conference at the University of Liverpool

Nigel Cochrane represents the University on both the Council of the Essex Society for Archaeology & History and the Council of Management of the Colchester Archaeological Trust.

Cathy Walsh is a member of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries Steering Group and is SCONUL representative for the University.
2016 – 17 IN NUMBERS

25,612
registered library users

877,642
E book sections downloaded

443,286
visits to the ASL

12,543
new books added

843
reading lists published

1,326
study spaces

458,334
loans

1,711,591
journal articles downloaded

1,904
Inter library requests satisfied

173
one to one appointments via ‘Book a Librarian’

91%
of borrow and return transactions via self-service

90.2%
satisfaction (NSS Q19 Library resources)
£2,567,314.00
Total spend on information resources (books, journals, databases)

4,017
students seen by their Subject Librarian (in groups or one to one)