
Marketing library services at University College Chester



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Since early 2002, Learning Resources at University College Chester (UCC) has been making a concerted effort to improve the marketing of its resources and services to both staff and students. UCC provides library services across two campuses, at Chester and Warrington, plus at seven education centres in Cheshire and the Wirral under the auspices of the School of Nursing, Midwifery, & Social Care.

In January 2002, in response to some feedback about our library guides, specifically from newly appointed library staff, we established a user education working party to review and overhaul our image and publication policies. Firstly we asked our graphics design team to produce a new departmental logo. The chosen design includes the college crest and colour, but has additional distinctive features defining the department within the institution. Almost all Learning Resources documents, from fax cover sheets to posters, display this common logo and style.

We then developed a set of high quality, visually attractive publications with a consistent format and terminology, conforming to a standard publication template. Each type of guide has its own colour theme: for example, database guides are green and subject guides aqua. New leaflet holders were bought and strategically located – in

addition to holders in the reading room, subject guides were placed at the end of relevant sections of shelving and database guides were located next to computers. We noted a rise in the use of databases, which we attribute largely to the new guides. They are also very useful in answering subject enquiries and for user training sessions. Each guide is also published in pdf format in our virtual learning environment. Shortly afterwards, we began electronic resource of the month workshop sessions which focused on one designated resource, such as PsycINFO. Unfortunately the sessions have not been as successful in attracting staff and students as hoped, even with some creative and innovative poster designs. Consequently, in future, these sessions will cover broader topics such as using electronic resources for research, e-books, or e-journals, or will be delivered in academic departments using the 'roadshow' idea.

In September 2002 we were given a stand at the finance and administration event for freshers. This provided the impetus to reconsider the induction experience and raise our profile by making new students aware before teaching started of who we are and what services and resources we offer (more than just books!). Learning Resources staff were asked to come up with ideas for a slogan – the winner being *information.sorted@learning.resources* - which appeared on printed publicity, staff T-shirts, post-it notes, pens, and paper carrier bags. The T-shirts were especially useful in raising our profile (literally!) as staff were easily recognisable, a feature appreciated by first year students during their initial days at college. The environmentally-friendly carrier bags continued to be used beyond freshers' week for other part-time induction events and as promotional material for the college International Development Office.

Poster advertising a user training session - designed by the in-house graphics department'



'Most wanted @Induction_03 - The Learning Resources carrier bag!'

A year later we built on this positive beginning by taking a greater role in induction, primarily by reviewing the impact of our Learning Resources video, traditionally shown during freshers' week. As a special project, our two graduate trainees interviewed students to ask what they thought new first year students really needed to know about the library. They then worked with our video production team to produce a more dynamic, student-centred video that sought to do away with the librarian and introduce students to the library and its services. The video was based on the likely viewpoints, experiences and expectations of new students and so aimed to be more appropriate to their needs.

We also re-evaluated and altered our induction tours. In 2002, we had approached students during freshers' week to sign up

for a tour during the following fortnight. However, once the students had received their timetables, many found the tour times unsuitable and a smaller number than expected turned out for each tour. A year later we advertised two daily lunchtime induction tours during the first two weeks covering both print and electronic resources. Staff were given a script to follow to ensure that we all broadly provided the same information and didn't miss out anything important. Unfortunately these events were still not as well supported as we had hoped and, as with the workshop sessions, we will be looking at other ways to increase student participation next year.



'Examples of the promotional material produced by Learning Resources'

Of course, the ongoing liaison work of our subject librarian teams has a marketing impact in a variety of ways. Learning Resources staff work in college committees, student liaison meetings, student and academic staff user education sessions, and more informally, to promote our range of services and demonstrate the use of our resources. The comprehensive package of user education material we have developed gives them additional support in these circumstances.

Outside of induction, another new and important marketing method used to promote our resources and services is our termly newsletter – The Learning Resource. Each issue is four pages (except for an eight-page edition in September), in full colour with lots of images and is written for both students and staff. Different issues focus on new services such as inter-campus loans or resources that we feel are underused, such as electronic journals. Having produced five issues so far, we've never had any problems filling the pages! As UCC is a multi-site institution the newsletter is also very useful in keeping staff and students aware of what is happening in Learning Resources across the college.

Each issue is produced by the teamwork of a group of staff drawn from all section and levels within Learning Resources. Once content has been agreed in outline, contributors are cajoled into putting pen to paper before the deadline. The newsletter also showcases the design work of our in-house graphics team and printing capabilities of our own print unit, hence marketing these services to the wider college. The finished newsletter is distributed to all college staff and placed at appropriate collection points for students.

The positive feedback we get on publication of *The Learning Resource*, coupled with the fact that our printed user education material is being taken by users from our display stands, makes us feel that we have definitely had an impact. The new format has undoubtedly improved the image of the department, and our staff now realise that marketing of services is an essential component of their role. The departmental logo and house style has coped in a wide variety of applications and contributes towards a sense of identity for staff working in disparate teams within the department. We're currently working on plans to install a plasma screen in the library foyer to display notices and information (photographs, videos) about our services. Informal evaluation of our overhauled marketing strategy has shown us how much we've improved in a short time, and this will hopefully be supported by a formal evaluation in the future.