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Got the knowledge? Focusing on the student: Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) Library Welcome Campaign

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Background

During summer 2005, the Induction Working Group at MMU Library undertook a major overhaul of its induction strategy. The all-new MMU Library 'Welcome' campaign became a staged process, aiming to avoid student information overload by providing bite-sized chunks of information when required. The main goal of this campaign was to introduce the Library's key services whilst promoting our approachability and willingness to support students. The campaign comprised a series of events:

- Pre-enrolment welcome flyer distributed to all new students
- A library stall at MMUnion Freshers' Fair

- A welcome induction session using the 'Cephalonian Method' (question card approach)¹ and a new streamlined handout
- Four Awareness Weeks delivered at intervals during the Autumn term

This article documents the transformation of the Library's induction process, the practical issues involved, perceived improvements, feedback received and considerations for future enhancements.

The Old Approach

Prior to the launch of the Library Welcome Campaign MMU had adopted a traditional and simple approach to induction. We delivered a single, forty-five minute PowerPoint presentation providing a general introduction to the Library, and gave students a bulky folder of handouts and a free pen. From this one brief session, students were expected to have all the introductory knowledge they needed to use and feel welcome in our libraries. Student evaluation of these sessions indicated that, although they appreciated receiving the information, there were key areas for improvement:

1. They wanted more interaction
2. They felt they had too much paperwork to take away
3. There was too much information to digest all at once

The introduction of the new Library Welcome Campaign focused on these specific issues.

Branding and Publicity

For the launch of the new campaign we felt it was important to have consistent and clear branding. Although MMU Library had already successfully branded its InfoSkills training², it was felt that the Library Welcome Campaign needed its own clear identity. In collaboration with an outside graphic design company³, the Library created the 'get the knowledge' tagline and some associated multi-coloured graphics to use throughout the campaign.

get the knowledge

We chose this design because we felt it looked impressive visually and that the bright colours would stand out and be something our students would remember and recognise in the future. This design was used in a wealth of campaign materials which can be seen throughout the rest of this article.

For example, the Freshers' Fair bookmark incorporated the 'Get the knowledge' tagline and also used the following lines:

"get the information : come along to your Library Welcome session"

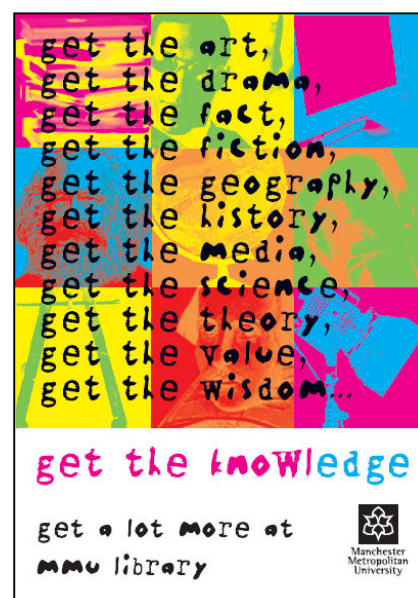
The e-mail awareness week followed the same format saying:

"get the message : it's the way that tutors, the library and other people in the University communicate with you"

The message was also reinforced by the use of branding on non-printed campaign materials including PowerPoint presentations and screensavers.

Pre-enrolment Flyer

We started our campaign by getting involved with pre-course publicity. Other services such as the Students' Union and Learning Support were getting in touch with students prior to enrolment and we felt that we should be doing this too. We wanted to make students aware of the Library before they even set foot on campus and let them know that it is a welcoming and friendly place. A pre-course leaflet was designed, which informed students of several things they could do before they even came to university, such as becoming familiar with the library website and looking at online reading lists. The flyer also told them that library staff would be at Freshers' Fair and that they would receive a library induction, making it clear where they could get more information and where they could meet us face-face.



Freshers' Fair

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Giveaways were seen as a crucial part of the day; without these the Library would not have been able to compete with other stalls. They consisted of MMU library pens, sweets and fortune cookies. The latter were our most popular giveaway. The fortune cookies contained funny sayings about libraries and a select few had a prize-winning message inside. Prizes included vouchers for Manchester shops and cinemas and also some toys and games. The cookies drew a lot of students to the stall as they were curious as to what was contained in the silver foil packets.

Library staff believed our presence at Freshers' Fair was a huge success:

"I felt we broke down a lot of pre-conceived ideas students may have had about the Library and its Librarians!"

"There was a tangible sense of genuine rapport between library staff and customers."

"The reaction in general to the stall seemed really positive and people who wouldn't normally show any interest in the library at least came over to have a look, which can only be a success."

Library Welcome Sessions

For the new Library Welcome Sessions, or induction sessions, our handouts were completely overhauled with the introduction of the new InfoCard. This included key information about the library and was presented in a handy wallet-size. This concept came from the University of Bath where staff won an award for their introductory pack at CILIP's Publicity and Public Relations Awards in the year it was launched⁵. Our InfoCard has proved a great success and students have continued to use the wallets throughout the year to house their ID cards alongside the library InfoCard. The wallets have been deemed far preferable to the bulky, overwhelming induction folder



previously disseminated at induction sessions. The eye-catching design of the InfoCard is quite busy and so, for inclusiveness, plain text versions of the card were made available online via the library website.

For our actual induction presentations we employed the 'Cephalonian method'¹, or 'question card approach' which made the sessions more interesting and enjoyable for both our students and also for the library staff presenting the sessions. This method of induction maintains students' interest, and engages them in the session as a means of helping them to remember important information and to have fun.

Awareness Weeks

As well as delivering an induction presentation to all new students, we also held four awareness weeks at each of our seven library sites throughout the first term. These events served as an additional means of informing new users about key library services and resources. New students typically attend numerous induction presentations in their first week at MMU, taking in large amounts of information prior to the start of their courses, which makes it difficult for them to fully understand and remember what they have been taught. Awareness weeks were designed to address this problem, by delivering bite-sized chunks of information throughout the first term and presenting it to students at the time and in the place they most needed it.

We ran four weekly campaigns that each focused on promoting one specific library service: Email; PINs and Renewals; Catalogue and Reading Lists; and Electronic Resources. The campaigns were staggered during the first term (Autumn 2006) and were held at times when we felt that the service being promoted was going to be particularly useful and relevant for students

Awareness Week 1: Email

Email awareness week was held during week three. It focused on encouraging students early in their course to check their MMU student email account on a regular basis. This would ensure that they received important communication from the Library throughout the academic year. Promotion

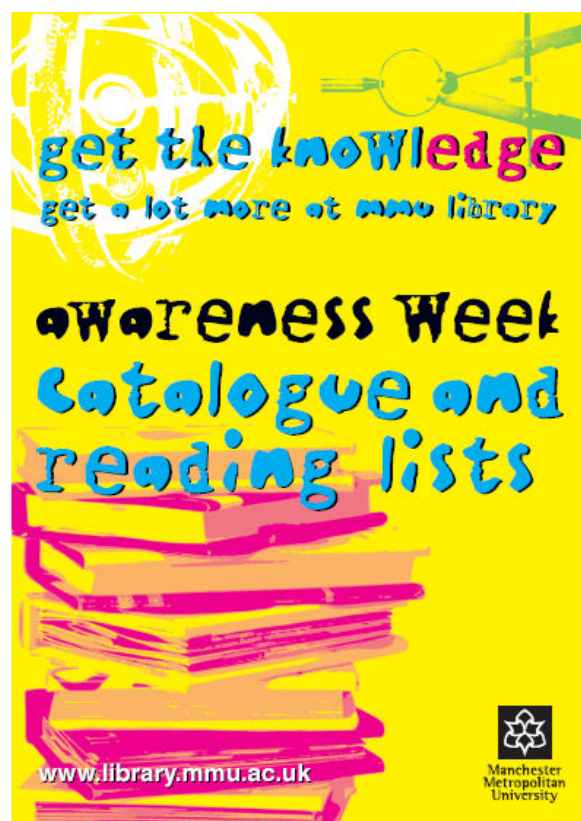
took place primarily at the issue counter of each site where staff inserted bookmarks into materials as students took them out on loan. The bookmarks provided the web address of the student email service and basic information on how and why students should access their MMU email account.

Awareness Week 2: PIN/Renewals

The PIN/Renewals awareness week held in week five informed students of the need to obtain their library PIN – a personal identification number which enables them to renew books online and by telephone. The fifth week of term was thought to be the best time to promote off-site renewals as this is when many students would need to renew library materials for the first time. Promotion of this week took place at the enquiry desks and issue counters of each site library where students were given their PIN if they did not already have one. PINs were written on a wallet-sized card which could be kept in their InfoCard wallet.

Awareness Week 3: Catalogue/Reading lists

In the eighth week of term the Catalogue/Reading lists awareness week was held to provide students with information about using the library catalogue and finding their reading lists online. This awareness week was timed just before reading week in order to ensure students were made aware that they could search the Library for books to use off-campus. In the week prior to this promotion, 6000 postcards were mailed to first year students. These postcards provided additional information about accessing the catalogue and online reading lists.



Postcards were also distributed to sites for staff to give to students at enquiry desks and issue counters.

Awareness Week 4: E-resources

The final awareness week, held in the eleventh week of term, targeted the promotion of electronic resources and aimed to prepare students for the Christmas vacation by ensuring they were aware of the wealth of library material online. An A5 flyer promoting the 'Electronic Library' section of the library website accompanied the campaign. The flyer was displayed at sites and given to students at service points, where staff alerted them to the fact that the library offers full-text access to thousands of e-journals and e-books.

Each awareness campaign was a themed week for the Library, where tailored posters and screensavers (displayed on all networked PCs) advertised the campaign. All library staff were encouraged to wear stickers and hand out the promotional materials at service points, thus involving everyone in providing students with the selected information.

Previously at MMU only subject librarians were responsible for delivering induction presentations. However, in awareness weeks, as the primary focus of our campaigns was at issue points, the involvement of support staff, who receive many queries from students and have regular face to face contact with them, was considered essential. The involvement of all staff in the promotions was one of the key elements to the success of the awareness weeks, especially as the level of enthusiasm from staff was high, particularly for the first two campaigns which centred around very practical services. A number of statistics were gathered to measure the impact of the four campaigns. Renewals during the month of the PINs/Renewals week showed a 9% increase in remote renewals compared to the same period the previous year. For the third campaign we looked at the number of hits on the library website (which is where students are instructed to go to access the catalogue and online reading lists), and the number of hits in November rose by over 200,000 hits from the same time the previous year. Similarly, hits for e-books on NetLibrary (which was promoted during our e-resources campaign)

increased threefold in November/December from the previous year. The number of logins and searches run on several databases also rose during this time. Finally, although student use of the University's email system could not be measured by the Library, the fact that thousands of email bookmarks were given to students makes it likely that this campaign also made an impact. While several factors may have led to the growing use of the Library's electronic resources and services, it nevertheless remains clear that awareness weeks have helped new students understand how to use the Library more effectively.

Staff feedback on the campaigns showed that, overall, they enjoyed promoting awareness weeks and believed them to be a success. As the weeks were primarily promoted at the issue counters of each site, staff felt that those campaigns directly related to borrowing books (such as PIN/Renewals) were easier to promote than non-book related campaigns (such as E-resources). Staff did mention that enthusiasm for the campaigns began to decline after the second awareness week, making it more difficult to effectively promote the latter two campaigns. Other factors that prevented staff from promoting the weeks effectively were queues and busy sessions at the counter, difficulty in knowing how to raise the relevant topics in conversation with students, and finding ways to get some users really interested in the messages being promoted.

Reflections for the future

Some alterations will be made to the Library Welcome Campaign to enhance it for the next academic year. To combat library staff's awareness week fatigue, the number of weeks will be reduced from four to three, by combining the latter two weeks. We hope that by promoting fewer campaigns and spreading them further apart from one another, staff will be more likely to remain enthusiastic for each and every event.

We also hope to incorporate more promotional activities outside of the Library to reach those new students who are still not setting foot inside our buildings in their first term. We plan to join events organised in faculties by Student

Services and Student Support Officers, and also to send emails to all first year students as part of the promotions during each campaign week.

Finally, we are currently looking at revamping our online induction so that it reflects the fun and lively approach of the Welcome Campaign and provides induction information in small chunks. We hope to pilot the use of Podcast tours for September 2006.

Conclusion

An overhaul of the old-style library induction campaign at MMU was long overdue. It had seemed increasingly inadequate for serving the needs of today's changing student body and displayed an over-reliance on one sole induction presentation. The new phased programme certainly offers increased contact with the students and greatly extends their period of introduction to our services and resources. They have more opportunities to 'get the knowledge' and hopefully feel most welcome in the Library. We must continue to 'break out' beyond the confines of the Library to reach new students, and offer as many induction opportunities and methods as possible to help engage with a burgeoning student body which increasingly includes a range of different backgrounds, responsibilities and experiences.

¹ N. Morgan and L. Davies, 'Innovative library induction – introducing the 'Cephalonian Method', *SCONUL Focus*, **32** (Summer/Autumn), 2004, pp4-8

² J. Murtagh and C. Williams, 'Tell me what you want, what you really, really want!' Developing students' information skills at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Library, by asking the right questions, and giving the right answers.', *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, **9** (1), 2003, p.101-112.

³ Epigram graphic designers. <http://www.epigram.co.uk/flash.html>

⁴ A. Brewerton, 'Inspired! Award-winning library marketing.' *New Library World*, **104**(1190/1191), 2003, pp.274-275.

⁵ Web Team. University Library Wins Award for Excellence. *University of Bath* [online]. 2000, [cited 04 January 2006] <<http://www.bath.ac.uk/pr/releases/libr.htm>>