Space to think

University of Bristol
Library Services Division
Strategy 2019 – 2024
In a world where change is constant, it is difficult to predict the future. Nevertheless, a clear strategy is necessary to set direction and guide the ambition for library services in the 21st century. It is an enormously helpful process to collectively align the aspirations of our students and staff with the needs of our university and beyond.

This strategy was developed initially with considerable contribution of staff across the Library Services Division. Skilled information professionals scanned our environment and identified the head winds and tail winds that will aid and challenge our strategy for the next 5 years. We then consulted widely with students, other professional services, the Library Advisory Group including representatives of each Faculty, the University Research Committee, the University Education Committee and Senate.

Political uncertainty, changing government policies, community perceptions on higher education, regulatory changes and the international environment provide opportunities and threats. Global markets, consumer expectations, tuition fees and new models for creating and sharing scholarly content create cost uncertainties. Wellbeing of students and staff is a major concern and requires us to mould our services and the ways that we work. Increasing expectations of students and parents, greater public accountability and the evolving role of civic universities provide further challenges.

The inexorable transition to digital information and services, cross-disciplinary concepts and big data, together with evolving open research practices changes the nature of our research practice. Concurrent changes in pedagogy within higher education teaching and learning provides enormous opportunities to innovate, experiment, improve the student experience and service delivery. At the same time, important changes in knowledge, information and library management, including copyright, intellectual property and Open Access provide both uncertainty and new opportunities.

The climate change emergency, a deep commitment to the green agenda and sustainability and the creation of a healthy environment concern Library Services staff greatly. We remain committed to creating an inclusive study environment and to providing a university-wide library service that is responsive to a diverse range of users. We embrace innovation and creativity, recognising the need to question our working practices in order to make improvements and to help all existing and potential users to get the most out of library services across the University.

Rising infrastructure costs, a desire to future-proof our services and a University-wide focus on cost containment requires a lean service model and response informed by further research and good practice in other institutions.

Library Services are integral to the engagement, research, teaching and learning, and student experience missions of the University. This new strategy has been an important aid to shared conversations about our future and sets a clear direction for the next 5 years.

Philip Kent
Director of Library Services and University Librarian
December 2019
2. Cornerstones of the Library Services Strategy

2.1 A commitment to fostering wellbeing, through our spaces, content, services and ways of working

Our priority is to work together, with University partners and with our staff and students to contribute towards good mental health and well-being for all.

We will provide comfortable, safe and sustainable spaces for students to study which will enhance learning and offer opportunities for rest and relaxation. We will ensure that our staff are equipped to recognise when support is needed and to signpost those in need of support to the appropriate professional service.

2.2 A blended approach to physical and digital service and content provision

We will embrace and exploit digital innovation, balanced with respect for our physical collections to enrich our services and communities. We will ensure that we have the right tools, infrastructure, funding and skills to capitalise on the rich opportunities afforded by digital resources, scholarship and service provision.

Our collections and services will be accessible, open, connected and usable for all. Our built and digital spaces will be welcoming, inclusive and provide access to research-rich content. We will provide opportunities for students, the academic community and the broader public to read, experience, and create new knowledge using our collections.

2.3 A New University Library for 2023/4

We will deliver a flagship new University Library at the heart of the Clifton Campus together with our stakeholders, expert designers and construction specialists. It will be a catalyst for change, and champion sustainability in the context of climate emergency to be fit for present and future generations. The new library will operate within an agreed Library Estate Masterplan to ensure provision of spaces that enrich student and academic experience and deliver efficient services. A contemporary and flexible service model will be implemented in time for the opening of the building.

Specialist facilities and services will be delivered by the Centre for Cultural Collections comprising the Library Special Collections and the Arts Faculty’s Theatre Collection.

2.4 Working in partnership with the University, professional and external organisations

We will work together in partnership and collaboration with local and national communities to build upon valued relationships for the long term. Our knowledge will be actively shared, and we will provide opportunities for people and communities to collaborate.

We will partner our communities, with a deep commitment to meeting user and stakeholder needs, offer expertise, promote our services and be recognised as a trusted collaborator. These values will inform how we make material available, how we engage and interact with staff and students, and our perspective on public engagement.

As a Library Services team, we will all seek to promote a positive working environment and culture to empower everyone to play their part in supporting themselves and colleagues. This will include better communications, working across teams, sharing knowledge and developing our people to respond to changing needs.
3. Strategic themes: key aims

3.1 Academic Wellbeing and Achievement

Aim: Committed to supporting learning, we will be at the centre of academic well-being and achievement

We will:
• Develop and maintain learning spaces across our campuses which inspire and enable our students and academics to think, learn, study and share knowledge together as a community of scholars.
• Introduce our information literacy and study skills strategies which align with and are embedded within the academic curricula.
• Deliver a blended approach to learning, involving face to face teaching alongside technology enhanced learning.
• Implement strategic interventions in targeted NSS subject areas and TEF subject level benchmarks.

3.2 Research Partnerships and Innovation

Aim: We will enhance the research impact, experience and outputs through effective partnerships with researchers, professional services and external organisations

We will:
• Continue as champions of intellectual freedom, providing open and equal access to information and knowledge where possible, through the promotion and support of Open Research practices.
• Maximise the visibility, accessibility and impact of the institution’s unique and distinctive collections and archives through the creation of an archive of digitised and born digital material.
• Develop a roadmap for establishing a Centre for Cultural Collections and an appropriate research infrastructure in preparation for the new University Library.
• Develop relevant services and facilities for the planned growth in Post Graduate Researchers.

3.3 Digital and Physical Collections and Services

Aim: We will strengthen the library as a digital and physical presence.
We will:
• Create a content strategy to encompass collection development and management, including identifying and exploiting new purchasing and delivery models.
• Ensure the Library Estate strategy including the new University Library exploits the opportunities that the physical and digital environment affords.
• Continue to participate in national collaborative initiatives and user groups and explore an offsite storage solution, providing timely access to collection materials for all users.
• Work co-operatively with University colleagues, as well as external agencies, to deliver the University Digital Strategy, to include the implementation of additional mobile solutions and support for the SMART campus approach facilitating new ways of teaching and research.

3.4 Global Civic University

Aim: We will support the University’s vision of a global civic university.
We will:
• Establish an engagement strategy for Library Services in collaboration with University colleagues to expand and enhance engagement opportunities with the city and wider communities.
• Provide professional leadership, share knowledge and foster collaboration with our regional, national, international and industry partners to deliver services that best serve the University.
• Recognising the city’s rich diversity, proactively forge relationships with local partners and communities, playing our part in post-16 educational initiatives, and development of a civic cultural quarter for Bristol.

3.5 Enabling the Future Library

Aim: Our staff will be empowered to improve the services we deliver.
We will:
• Encourage staff ideas, innovation and skills, working in an open and collaborative way as one library to help shape and develop our services.
• Promote our shared responsibility for mental health and wellbeing for our library staff and user communities.
• Ensure our workforce reflects and improves services for our diverse user community.
• Continue to look for opportunities to use our resources to support a sustainable future for the University, including exploiting the opportunities presented through digital workspace improvements and systems investment.
For more information about all libraries and library-managed study spaces see:

- bristol.ac.uk/library
- library-enquiries@bristol.ac.uk
- bristol.ac.uk/library/locations-opening
- bristol.ac.uk/library/accessibility-support