

New Audiences, New Opportunities in a joint Academic and Public Library

The Hive, University of Worcester, U.K

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The Hive is an inspirational and unique partnership between the University of Worcester (UW) and Worcester County Council (WCC). The first fully-integrated library of its kind in Europe, it opened on 2nd July 2012 with approximately 10,000m² of public space, 800 study spaces and 250 PCs over 5 floors. As well as being the University library, it contains the city's main public library, (including a spacious and well-stocked children's library), Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service and a Council Contact Centre.

Worcestershire is a county in the English West Midlands with a population of slightly over half a million. Worcester is the county town and only city. The County Council has a statutory responsibility to provide a public library service and its current priorities are: Open for Business; Health and Well Being; Children and Families; and The Environment (Worcestershire County Council, 2017). The public library facilities and services have a role to play in each of these.

The University is a relatively new but rapidly growing institution with approximately 10,000 students which believes that it "has a duty to deliver public benefit" and "aims to be an exemplar" to the Higher Education community in this regard (University of Worcester, 2013 p.20). In particular, it seeks to make the University a highly accessible resource to the community, particularly to children and young people (ibid, p.24) and has a history of developing close partnerships with business, cultural and community organisations.

Opened at a time when public libraries across the country were beginning to close due to local authority funding pressures, and universities were under pressure to deliver value to students paying tuition fees, The Hive is a bold statement of the University's ethos and the mutual benefits of partnership.

DESIGNING THE HIVE

In 2004, the public library service had identified that the original Worcester City library building was no longer fit for purpose and needed to modernise to raise the level of service required by library users of the future. At the same time, the University was exploring the development of a new City Campus and was actively seeking to improve its learning resources. The Council and the University therefore forged a partnership that led to the creation of The Hive, allowing both organisations to further their strategic aims. A site was identified between the University's City Campus and Worcester city centre, which creates a physical and metaphorical link between the University and its local community.

The Hive was always conceived as presenting multiple opportunities for Worcester's communities to come together and for all to benefit from that integration. It quickly became apparent that these benefits would be maximised if everyone had equal and seamless access to all facilities, and this became a fundamental guiding principle in the design of both the building and the services within it, requiring us to look for and implement innovative solutions. In addition, there was an aspiration to attract new audiences and to offer fully accessible learning opportunities to both University members and the wider community, including – importantly – those who would otherwise have felt excluded from university environments. Therefore, a full programme of outreach and education opportunities was devised specifically to target hard-to-reach audiences from the outset.

The overall vision of a fully integrated library is supported by 10 core values (shown in Table 1) which remain at the heart of The Hive’s ethos and have informed the design of both the building and its services.

Inspiration	Connection
Aspiration	Learning
Integration	Inclusivity
Enduring Values	Well-being
Sustainability	Visibility

Table 1. The Hive core values

The library service is staffed by both University and Council employees, working as an integrated team. Each service (County and University) has its own strategic priorities but the Hive has a set of operational guidelines and customer service standards which are delivered and adhered to by all staff in the building including the facilities management team and Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

DEVELOPING NEW AUDIENCES

Figure 1 shows some of the principal stakeholders and customers of the University Library Services. As well as the expected academic stakeholders, they include WCC staff at branch libraries elsewhere in Worcestershire; Hive Facilities Management staff, and community groups and public library members of all ages.

Figure 1 Selected Stakeholders, showing change of engagement / influence of targeted customer groups since opening

PRIMARY CUSTOMERS

UW = University of Worcester

Secondary Customers

WCC = Worcestershire County Council

(Additional Stakeholders)

INFLUENCE	(High)	D	(UW Academic Heads) (UW Committees)	UW TEACHING STAFF UW RESEARCHERS (Students' Union)	UW STUDENTS (Vice Chancellor) (University Executive)	
	C	(External funders / regulatory bodies)	(WCC branch library staff) Other UW Service Departments (Facilities Management)	(UW IT) (Hive non-library staff)	UW LIBRARY STAFF	
	B	(WCC IT)	UW Alumni Pre-entry students Business community	(Hive Volunteers)		
	A	(2012 position)	WCC Library Members			
	(Low)	Wider community				
		A	B	C	D	
	(Low)	ENGAGEMENT				(High)

Potential opportunities for engagement were so extensive, it was necessary to prioritise groups of particular importance to the partners with whom to develop services. These included school children (especially those approaching University age) since working with young people is a strength of the University, and also a high priority for the County Library service. Literacy, well-being and preparation for life after school are all areas where The Hive seeks to have input. Both the University and County Council also wish to build and strengthen links with the local business community, in order to support the local economy and workforce development, inform curriculum design and create work opportunities for students, so this was another key group.

Both groups were initially in the lower left quadrant of the stakeholder matrix (i.e. low engagement and low influence in the development and delivery of services), but 4 years later, have moved across and up the matrix. The rest of this chapter will reflect on a few of the initiatives that have taken

place in the first years of The Hive's existence and which have helped to develop stakeholder engagement.

CASE STUDY 1: ENGAGING STUDENTS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Pressure from students for their chosen higher education institutions to deliver has never been higher. Standards of teaching are under scrutiny as part of the UK Government's Teaching Excellence Framework (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2016), and the demand for continuous service improvement shapes change across the sector. More than ever before, library services in higher education are consulting with and engaging their students in the development of services and this is an area in which UW Library Services are taking a lead (Pittaway, 2016).

The Hive however, presents a further opportunity: for students to be active in shaping and delivering services to the wider community as well as their peers. In The Hive, students can be actively involved in developing and delivering services to the full range of customers including children, families and older people. Nurses in training have delivered basic health checks and promoted becoming a blood donor to customers. Teachers in training have delivered a Parliament Day for primary schools where children got the opportunity to debate a bill and be interviewed by the media (University of Worcester, 2016). In the process, students develop a range of skills to support them in the classroom and the workplace beyond: team working, customer service, coordinating, researching, writing for impact. There are myriad ways in which students can get involved in service delivery, below we have focussed on just three.

[Photo 1 – Parliament Day]

1. Work Placements

The Hive offers a range of work placements for students of many disciplines, which fulfil course requirements to work up to 60 hours. Through these placements students have had the opportunity to develop and deliver new initiatives either for their peers or for a wider community. One example would be The Great Hive Book Rescue – now an annual event; we collect unwanted books from students towards the end of the year and sell them at the beginning of the academic year. All proceeds go to Students' Union nominated charities. Students of visual arts undertook a residency at The Hive, producing works inspired by The Hive, and contributing to displays and exhibitions in the public arena. For the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, an English Literature student planned and delivered a Shakespeare Day – where pop-up performances of Shakespeare took place across The Hive for our range of visitors including children and families.

2. Volunteering

The Hive, like many other institutions relies heavily on volunteers to deliver added value activity. Students form an integrated part of The Hive's volunteer workforce, working alongside a variety of others from the community. We have worked with the Students' Union to recruit volunteers who work towards their V-Record, getting 50 hours or more service recorded on their degree transcript and a local Worcester Award. Examples include students of early years delivering storytime and business/computing students supporting customers with limited digital skills to access services online.

3. Study Happy

Study Happy is an initiative developed by Library Services at the University of Worcester in response to a survey of people studying in The Hive, many of whom expressed an interest in understanding more about better study practice both for academic success and for their own well-being. Similar

initiatives run in other university libraries, but in the context of The Hive, the Study Happy website and accompanying programme of well-being and study support is also open to local 6th form (16-18 year olds) and college students (Library Services, 2016). We have also engaged University students in delivering the programme: students of nutrition impart knowledge to others at healthy snack giveaway sessions, students completing a module on coaching are planned to deliver mini fitness assessments and students of creative writing have populated blog posts and the Study Happy web pages. In all instances students have used their knowledge in context and brought innovation and insight to the programme whilst gaining valuable organisational, research and communication skills along the way.

[Photo 2 – A UW Masters student in nutritional therapy offers advice on healthy eating for exam success]

Mutual Benefits and Next Steps

Feedback from students on all placements/opportunities shows that they gain valuable skills and experience in these roles, and they consistently cite the range of opportunities that arise from the integrated library at The Hive which would not arise in a Higher Education only context. For The Hive and the wider community, student engagement invigorates the service – making it relevant to our customers and drawing on cutting edge learning and research to implement innovative ideas and delivery.

Recruitment and commitment of students is sometimes a challenge; students' priority is (rightly) their chosen course of study. We have undertaken a survey of students to find out whether they know about volunteering at The Hive, and what would make them want to volunteer, so we can shape roles to students' needs as well as those of the service. In response to this and other feedback, we continue to develop an effective framework for students to work/volunteer within, providing effective induction, training, and clear project briefs.

To increase commitment to the opportunities and to place value on them, we are researching the possibility of engaging students in service delivery around their specific areas of study by developing accredited work placements which are fully embedded within modules. Examples of this might include students of early years supporting stay and play activities for the under 5s or computing students developing apps or supporting marketing functions.

The Hive also presents a range of opportunities for students to undertake research; several PhD students from other institutions have made The Hive the subject of their study. We recently benefited from the research interests of a lecturer in the Business School specialising in Customer to Customer Interaction (CCI) who has conducted a preliminary study with staff on the effects of CCI within our wide customer base at The Hive. The study has informed staff development and has given us a new approach to supporting managing behaviours across the building. A SAP (Students as Partners) project, is underway with students of teaching and early years consulting on and improving the Teaching Collection resources. However, it is apparent that further opportunities exist for Student Partners to work within learning and teaching project teams or for research students to conduct studies on various aspects of The Hive and our innovative model.

CASE STUDY 2: SERVICES TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Background

Prior to The Hive opening, the University Business School was already working with the local business community, as were the County Council who provided advice and information services through Worcestershire Business Central (part of the Government-supported growth hub network)

and their economic research team. This commitment to collaborative working, and sharing of resources has been key to facilitating the development of the service to the local business community focussed in The Hive. However, neither Worcester City Library nor the University Library had concentrated on providing bespoke services to the business sector. So one of the first steps was to pose the question: How could the partners work together to engage with and provide a service to the local Business community; and, what could that service look like?

To help answer this question a business services steering group was created consisting of representatives from The Hive, University (Library Services and Worcester Business School), and Worcestershire County Council Libraries and Business Support. The remit of this group was and still is to discuss ideas, share knowledge and experience, and to work out how best to work together to help provide services and activities to benefit the business community.

The first influential decision made was to include a business centre in the initial design for The Hive. To help inform plans for this area the group consulted with representatives from the local business community and took inspiration from visits to the British Library Business Information and IP (Intellectual Property) Centre. By the time The Hive opened in July 2012 the Business Centre on level two of The Hive was in place, featuring a stylish lounge area for informal networking, free Wi-Fi, business resources (print materials and specialist on-line databases such as COBRA – the Complete Business Reference Adviser), and well-appointed meeting rooms equipped with the latest technology. There are 2 principle benefits to the communities that use it.

1. Resources and Facilities

The Hive is itself an award-winning, unique example of design and architecture; a landmark and easily accessible building which in a difficult economic climate provides increased and improved resources and services for everyone. In addition to the Business Centre resources mentioned above, these include computers, printing, copying and scanning facilities and informal meeting places. Hive staff are on hand to assist and signpost customers to any further advice they may require such as the business support advice offered by the Council's Worcestershire Business Central, the Chamber of Commerce and the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) who offer advice and support on starting, running, growing and funding businesses. For the University of Worcester, which itself acts as a strong magnet and contributor to economic and intellectual growth within Worcestershire, this joined-up thinking and extension of the offer within Library Services is very beneficial. Developing an entrepreneurial spirit amongst students and within all university courses, and building links with business is becoming increasingly important. University students and staff, with The Hive as their library, are well placed to take advantage of the extra services provided through the partnership. So, in addition to the 'usual' University offer such as learning resources (books, journals, specialist databases), information literacy teaching and individual support from the Academic Liaison Librarian for the school, The Hive also offers business events, training and networking – helping to bring a real connection with commerce and industry. The Hive itself has also proved to be an attractive case study for Worcester Business School students and is included within an operations management module and has featured as a topic for some student dissertations.

2. Events Programme

The development of the programme of events for the business community within The Hive relies on working with a range of partners and has included skills workshops, business breakfasts, and lectures. The skills workshops have become a key element of the offer and have included free workshops on: selling, self-coaching, marketing, social media, taxation, cyber security, and web design. Many of these workshops are organised by the County Council, run by partner training companies and funded by the government. The Hive offers a first class venue for this type of training. Other events involve expert speakers from the local business community. The Hive events

have also benefitted from the expertise of University lecturers, who have shared their knowledge with the local business community on cyber security and other subjects. These workshops have proved very popular and we have been able to build up a database of contacts from local organisations and have an expanding client database.

Particularly successful have been the regular business breakfasts which are sponsored by local companies and hosted at The Hive. Haines Watts (a local accountancy firm) is currently our regular sponsor and we have recently been successful in bringing on board additional sponsors such as Sutcliffe & Co (a local insurance brokers) and FreshNous (a local digital creative marketing agency). We have run about six events a year and have attracted on average thirty attendees, providing useful information and networking opportunities for the local business community. Topics are varied, ranging from staff appraisals to Cyber Essentials Certification.

More detail on the business offer can be found in Allen (2016).

[Photo 3 – Business Breakfast]

What has worked less well?

We work with a multitude of partners – Worcestershire County Council, University of Worcester, the business community, Worcester Business Improvement District (BID), Chamber of Commerce, Worcester City Council, Worcester CrownGate Shopping Centre, the Worcestershire LEP – and this is a real strength and has created an excellent network of contacts and organisations. However, at the same time, the downside can be the complexity of knowing who does what, when and where. Organisations do not of course stay static, and funding pressures and reorganisations within both local government and central government, can raise challenges that are not always predictable. We continue to work to communicate with partners and keep abreast of changes.

Staffing can also be a challenge. Although the business offer in The Hive is very much about utilising a network of organisations, it is important to have an individual to provide the main point of contact for business development, to work with local businesses, Worcestershire Business Central and other agencies to organise events and coordinate activity. Between 2014 and summer 2016 we were fortunate to have funding as part of the University Momentum Project for a Business Development Graduate Intern and this role was very successful in growing partnerships and organising events with the business community. This funding has now ended and an Events Officer for the County Council has picked up the organisation of events in The Hive. The day-to-day running and managing of the service is carried out by a number of staff with an affiliation to business, including the Events Officer, the Business Development Manager, the Marketing and Communications Officer, The Hive Administration Team and the Academic Liaison Librarian for Worcester Business School. The advantage of this is that we work across the partnership to deliver this service, however networking, growing and spearheading services is challenging without a dedicated role.

Next Steps

Future partnerships and ongoing collaboration will be the key to growth of services. There is extensive collaboration between the Worcestershire LEP, the University, Worcestershire County Council and Worcester City Council, concentrating on entrepreneurship and innovation.

Worcestershire is also becoming renowned for cyber industries, and The Hive is well placed for providing the space for training and business support.

The newly opened Law School at the University of Worcester plan to host business breakfasts in the near future to add to our programme of events. They also plan to run voluntary advice surgeries which will be another key offer for the future.

By targeting the local business community, The Hive has undoubtedly created a unique service that reaches out to and benefits the wider local business community. Not only a council library, or a university library, The Hive offers the space and facilities to network and learn in formal and informal settings.

CONCLUSIONS

As The Hive approaches its 5th birthday, partnership remains at its core and the values continue to guide services and activities. If either organisation were operating alone, creating meaningful collaborations and working in partnership would be an add-on, but the success of this unique library is demonstrated by the new opportunities that occur almost daily – many more than we have the capacity to pursue. The challenge remains to prioritise these opportunities; to identify and follow up those which will have most impact on our key audiences, meet our objectives, and fulfil the vision. Given the challenges outlined, the outlook is still bright and we look forward to new, exciting developments inspired and facilitated by our partnership working.

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