

# Pop-up Library at the University of Birmingham: Extending the reach of an Academic Library by taking 'The Library' to the students

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## Abstract

Aligning with student engagement and promotional strategies, a Pop-up Library project was initiated at the University of Birmingham. This involved setting up temporary, staffed stalls in different locations across campus in order to informally communicate with students and effectively take 'the Library' to them. This article discusses the planning and implementation of the Pop-up Library, including the rationale for the initiative. Details are given of the stalls themselves, the wide range of staff involved, the many locations trialled, the promotional materials used, and the ways in which the venture was advertised and subsequently evaluated. Results of a questionnaire used on the stalls are presented. Conclusions are drawn as to the effectiveness of the Pop-up Library as a communication tool, with particular emphasis on breaking down barriers between students and library staff, and proactively raising students' awareness of the many ways Library Services can enhance their learning.

KEYWORDS: Pop-Up Library, Academic Library, Engagement, Promotion, Roving

## Introduction

In order to increase awareness of library support and engage further with students, a Library Services 'Pop-up Library' programme was implemented at the University of Birmingham. Temporary, staffed stalls were set up at locations around the campus throughout the 2014-15 academic year to, effectively, take 'the library' to the students. The project aimed to extend the 'reach' of Library Services beyond current users and to help existing users learn more about useful services, resources and facilities. It also sought to provide opportunities both for students to ask questions of library staff in an informal environment and for staff to learn more about student perceptions of current and potential services. The idea fits in well with University aims (University of Birmingham, 2010; 2015) and the value of the concept is supported by academic literature.

The purpose of this article is to explore the Pop-up Library model adopted at the University of Birmingham, including indicators of its impact. A review of existing literature indicates the value of promoting library support, explores possible barriers to service usage, and provides examples of 'Roving Librarian' and 'Pop-up Library' projects. The unique aspects of the University of Birmingham Pop-up Library are then explained, including the methodology employed. The results are detailed, discussed and a number of recommendations made. The article is likely to be of interest to anyone considering promoting their library services beyond the physical building by 'popping-up' in varied locations with an engaging stall, expert staff, and help at the point of need.

## Literature Review

Evidence suggests that making use of academic libraries increases student retention (Crawford & Irving, 2005; Haddow, 2013; Soria, Fransen, & Nackerud, 2014) and positively influences student

performance (Davidson, Havron Rollins, & Cherry, 2013; Samson, 2014; Stone & Ramsden, 2013). However, while accepting that student familiarity with library services will vary from institution to institution, there is evidence to suggest awareness is lacking. A study by Dalal and Lackie (2014) revealed a lack of awareness of “the Libraries’ most expensive resources and services”, including the resource discovery tool, subject-specific library resources and group study rooms (p. 227). As part of a larger study, Mizrachi (2010) emphasises that this is why “outreach to students, and perhaps even more important to faculty, is so essential” (p. 577).

Toner (2008) and Goodall and Pattern (2010) identify a limited amount of research on low or non-users of UK academic libraries. In her survey at St Martin’s College, Toner found part-time and first-year students made up a large group of non-users. Robinson and Reid (2007), in their 12 qualitative interviews with undergraduate students, found that “lack of awareness of services, embarrassment or shyness, anxiety caused by mechanical barriers and affective barriers” were all reasons why enquiry services were not used (p. 405). Lack of awareness and unwillingness to engage with library staff has also been identified in different types of users; for example postgraduate students (Beard & Bawden, 2012) and English as a Second Language students (Martin, Reaume, Reeves, & Wright, 2012). The results of these papers offer libraries a challenge to engage with non-users and to consider proactive ways, inside and outside of the library building, to showcase library resources and remove barriers to access.

Increasingly, there are examples of partnerships created between libraries and students (Dubicki, 2009; Duke, MacDonald & Trimble, 2009; Han, Wang, & Luo, 2014; Logan 2011), and some indication that such partnerships encourage an increase in wider student engagement (Appleton & Abernethy, 2013; Mangrum & West, 2012; Walton, 2010). Dubicki (2009) presents a case study of 21 Masters of Business Administration students who were asked, as part of their course assessment, to “create a promotional strategy plan... that would increase awareness of library resources and services” (p. 166). Popular suggestions for sales promotion tools were “giveaways” and “contests / monthly drawings” (p. 173), whilst in the “Personal selling” category, “library employees” was the top suggestion. Dubicki noted: “Every interaction with individuals on campus represents a golden opportunity for library staff to sell the services of the library” (p. 175).

Elsewhere in the literature, the concept of the ‘Roaming’ (or ‘Roving’) librarian - defined by McCabe and MacDonald (2011) as “anything occurring away from the confines of the reference desk” (p. 2) - is referred to. While implementing a Roaming Librarian service outside of the library building is rare (Miles, 2013), literature on the concept does identify some key considerations. Penner (2011) suggests that the key to “any Roving Librarian project should be very simple: be approachable” (p. 29). Other commentators concur with this, arguing that the effective staffing of roving projects relies on individuals being customer-focussed and confident (McCabe and McDonald, 2011; Schmehl Hines, 2007). In terms of choosing a location outside of the library, evidence suggests that spaces which are academic, or a crossover of academic and social, function most effectively (McCabe and McDonald, 2011; Schmehl Hines, 2007). The University of Huddersfield’s Roving Librarian project found that “over 80% of the students surveyed say that the encounter [with a roving librarian outside of the library] will lead to an increased use of resources” (Sharman, 2012, p. 8).

More recently, the term ‘Pop-up Library’ is used. Davis, Rice, Spagnolo, Struck, and Bull (2015) define it as: “a collection of resources taken outside the physical library space to the public” (p.97). They cite key elements as “discovery” (p.94), “informal access to library resources” (p. 97) and being “unexpected in the space it occupies, thus generating a buzz and garnering attention” (p. 97). They detail the aims of six Australian public sector Pop-up Libraries, many of which were around promotion, awareness raising and targeting non-users.

Nunn and Ruane (2012) detail an initiative in which librarians temporarily staffed a University Student Center and a Writing Center. Students were positive about librarians being in other places to the library and receiving research support at the point of need. Del Bosque and Chapman (2007) did something similar, setting up at 5 different locations, including student accommodation which proved a popular venue. "Our willingness to come to them seems to make a big difference in their willingness to then come to us" (Schmidt, as cited in Del Bosque and Chapman, 2007, p. 255). In early 2014, the University of Birmingham also ran a successful pilot event in the Birmingham Business School which saw engagement with over 100 students during a 3 hour period (Anderson, Bull, & Cooper, 2014).

Although such events are implemented in different ways by different institutions, consideration of some common themes is suggested in order to be successful. These include timing, staffing, location and use of mobile devices (Askew, 2015; Gadsby & Qian, 2012; McCabe & MacDonald, 2011; Schmehl Hines, 2007; Sharman, 2014; Widdows, 2011). Many cite their motivation for the initiative as answering questions at the point of need and raising the profile of their service.

The University of Birmingham Pop-up Library builds on the literature and combines the identified good practice with the flexibility to innovate and trial different things in this field. Recommendations are presented towards the end of this article.

## **Methodology**

A key feature of the University of Birmingham's Pop-up Library was the scale. For example, the number of events and different locations, the range of material procured for the stalls and the number of staff involved from across the service. This section details the methodology of setting up this large scale Pop-up Library programme.

## **Finance**

The Pop-up Library was supported by a successful bid for Alumni Impact Funds. The funds were used to pay for staff training, equipment for the stall, promotional material and small incentives for student participation in questionnaires.

## **Locations and Timings**

The Pop-up Library set up in 23 locations across the campus, mainly over the lunch time period 11.45 am to 2.15 pm. Pop-up instances took place in a variety of spaces, which can be classified as teaching/learning, social, and mixed. Teaching/learning spaces were those where teaching/learning was the prominent activity in the vicinity, and included foyers to teaching buildings and corridors outside lecture theatres. Social spaces were often near to informal seating areas and/or food and drink outlets. More diverse examples included the Guild of Students, student accommodation, the sports centre and outside in a marquee. Mixed areas were locations which included both social and teaching/learning space in close proximity.

When planning instances near teaching/learning spaces, consideration was given to the types of students to be targeted, e.g. subject area and level of study. University databases (including programme handbooks, timetables and room bookings) were interrogated to find times and locations that would provide for the targeted cohort(s) but also as many other students as possible.

Some Pop-up stalls were themed around key periods in the student life cycle. Stalls with a focus on exam preparation were run during the summer term, and a dissertation-themed stall aimed at Postgraduate Taught students was trialled in June.

## Logo

To give the Pop-up Library a distinctive identity, a logo was designed (see Figure 1). This used the same colours and style as Library Services' main logo, but identified the Pop-up Library as something different, to pique student curiosity.



**Figure 1: Pop-up Library Logo – fitting in with the style and colours of Library Services' main logo (also pictured)**

## Staffing

Pop-up instances were usually staffed by two people at a time. By involving 31 members of staff on a rota basis (including 'frontline' library staff as well as those from academic liaison and teaching-focussed roles), the Pop-up Library combined traditional information-giving with student engagement. Stalls were facilitated by representatives from the three divisions of University of Birmingham's Library Services: Library Customer Support (LCS), Collection Management and Development (CMD), and Library Academic Engagement (LAE). The latter encompasses Subject Support (the subject librarian team, known as Subject Advisors), the Academic Skills Centre (ASC) and the Digital Technology Skills Team (DTST).

Staff attended briefing sessions before and during the programme of Pop-ups, where practical issues regarding the stall were discussed, and best practice shared. Most staff also received training from an external company who had experience of coaching library staff in user engagement.

## Stall, promotional literature and 'freebies'

The stall consisted of a long table covered by a Library Services cloth, flanked by two pull-up banners. A range of promotional items was accrued and developed to attract visitors and initiate meaningful interactions. Existing Library Services literature was assembled to reflect the range of services offered. This included subject-specific resource guides promoting the Subject Advisor service and leaflets promoting the ASC and DTST. Where possible, literature was intended to be timely. For example, promotional leaflets advertising imminent training sessions were created to take advantage of the Pop-up Library as an additional means of marketing them. A mobile device was available to demonstrate electronic resources and signpost students to appropriate pages of the Library's website.

Building on recommendations from the external training, a selection of 'freebies' featuring the Pop-up Library logo was developed internally, including highlighter pens, stress balls and postcards. The training suggested that staff on the stall may feel more confident in initiating and/or developing communication with students if they had something 'in hand' to draw attention. Promotional material was also acquired from publishers, who were asked if they could send materials (pens, post-it notes etc.) relevant to databases subscribed to by the University. Publisher response was significant, with a range of 'freebies' gratefully received. As a significant proportion of Pop-up

instances occurred near teaching spaces, an effort was made to resource stalls with information and ‘freebies’ relevant to the subject disciplines of students likely to be in close proximity. Figure 2 shows some examples of the stall.



**Figure 2: Examples of the Pop-up Library stall in different locations**

## Questionnaire

A short questionnaire was developed for use on the stall. This turned the Pop-up Library into a two-way communicative tool, one that simultaneously promotes and gathers feedback on Library Services. Students filling out the questionnaire were entered into a prize draw, which was used to further pique their interest. Much like the promotional ‘freebies’, the questionnaire also provided staff with something ‘in hand’ to develop interactions. Additionally, where students indicated they were happy to be contacted again, it gave the Pop-up team a pool of respondents to contact later with an evaluative Impact Survey.

## Advertising

Although literature recommends the element of surprise (Davis et al., 2015), planned Pop-up instances were advertised. Announcements were made via Library Services’ Facebook and Twitter accounts and the dates displayed on the Library Services website. For a number of events, members of academic staff lecturing in the relevant building at the time were asked to promote the Pop-up Library during their session.

## Impact Survey

A follow-up ‘Impact Survey’ was sent to students who had supplied their e-mail addresses when completing the questionnaire. They were contacted within six months and asked whether their visit to the Pop-up Library had benefitted them or encouraged them to engage further with Library Services.

## Results

### Communication / Interactions with students

A counter was used to record the number of visits to the stall. Only meaningful engagement was included. Table 1 shows a summary of the 23 Pop-up events, which saw interaction with a total of 934 students.

**Table 1: Summary of Pop-up Library Sessions detailing engagement. Instances with the same reference number (column 1) occurred in the same venue but on different days.**

Space				Session Details			Engagement	
Reference	Teaching/ Learning	Social	Mixed	Month	Time of Day	Length (hours)	Interactions per session	Interactions per hour
1	✓			November	Morning to lunch	2.50	60	24.0
2	✓			November	Morning to lunch	2.50	60	24.0
3			✓	November	Lunch to afternoon	2.50	60	24.0
4	✓			December	Morning to lunch	4.25	25	5.9
5	✓			January	Lunch to afternoon	2.50	15	6.0
6	✓			February	Lunch	1.50	30	20.0
6	✓			February	Lunch	2.50	30	12.0
7		✓		February	Lunch	2.50	20	8.0
8			✓	February	Lunch	2.50	50	20.0
9			✓	February	Lunch	2.50	6	2.4
5	✓			February	Lunch	2.50	13	5.2
3			✓	February	Lunch	2.50	35	14.0
10		✓		February	Lunch	2.50	18	7.2
11	✓			March	Lunch	2.50	20	8.0
12		✓		March	Lunch	2.50	13	5.2
13		✓		March	Evening	3.00	41	13.7
14		✓		March	Lunch	3.50	168	48.0
7		✓		March	Lunch	2.50	48	19.2
15		✓		March	Lunch	2.50	26	10.4
13		✓		March	Evening	3.00	26	8.7
16			✓	April	Lunch	2.50	102	40.8
17		✓		April	Morning to lunch	3.00	48	16.0
17		✓		June	Lunch	2.50	20	8.0
			<b>Total</b>			<b>60.75</b>	<b>934</b>	
			<b>Average</b>			<b>2.64</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>15.4</b>

Both undergraduate and postgraduate students visited the stall. Although data about specific cohorts were not recorded, anecdotally staff members were aware that they were engaging with a variety of groups within these broader cohorts, such as distance learners and English as Second Language students. Figure 3 shows some students interacting with one of the stalls.



**Figure 3: Students interacting with one of the Pop-up Library stalls**

Conversations with students were held on a range of topics, including library subject support, discipline-specific resources, searching effectively, referencing, training sessions, and how to use the Library's online chat service. The following case studies give further anecdotal examples.

### **Student common room**

The busiest Pop-up event was in the student common room of an academic department, where 168 students participated. The Subject Advisor for that department commented: "I had some informal chats about using RefWorks [Referencing software], Medline [journal database] and such, which helped give me an idea of how students were progressing... Definitely worth being there and reminding students of what's on offer and finding out more from students themselves in a more relaxed setting than a teaching session".

### **Teaching Building Atrium**

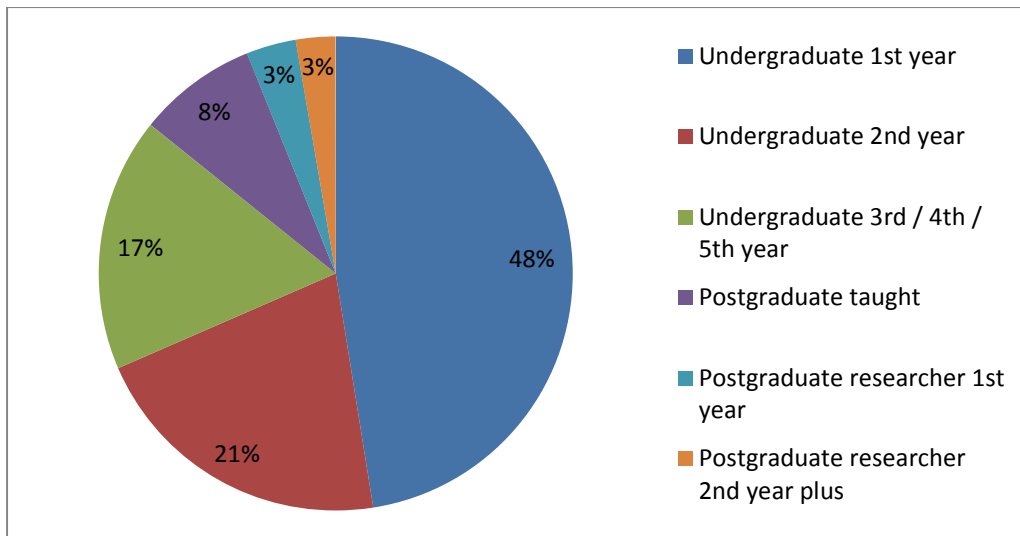
The lowest figure recorded was in the atrium of a departmental teaching building, where four students and two members of academic staff engaged. The event was still seen as a success due to the quality of the interactions. Two of the students were 3rd year undergraduates concerned about their dissertations. Information was provided on relevant journal databases and forthcoming library workshops. An MSc student who had been meaning to contact their Subject Advisor but had not yet managed it was keen to book an appointment whilst visiting the stall. The fourth student was a distance learner and so being able to have face-to-face contact on one of their days on campus, without prior appointment, was useful. Engaging with academic staff also helped to further develop the Library's relationship with the department; something which Mizrachi (2010) identifies as important.

### **Reflections by a member of Library Customer Support staff**

A member of Library Services, who helped facilitate one of the stalls, commented: "I did have enquiries from students that had never used the Library before which was fantastic, as I got to introduce them to the services we offer. I also had general queries about day to day library life and I felt like these questions would not have been asked if they had not stopped by the Pop-up Library". Additionally, she commented on an unexpected benefit: "I enjoyed working with members of staff that I had not met before. It was a lovely opportunity to ask them about their roles in the library".

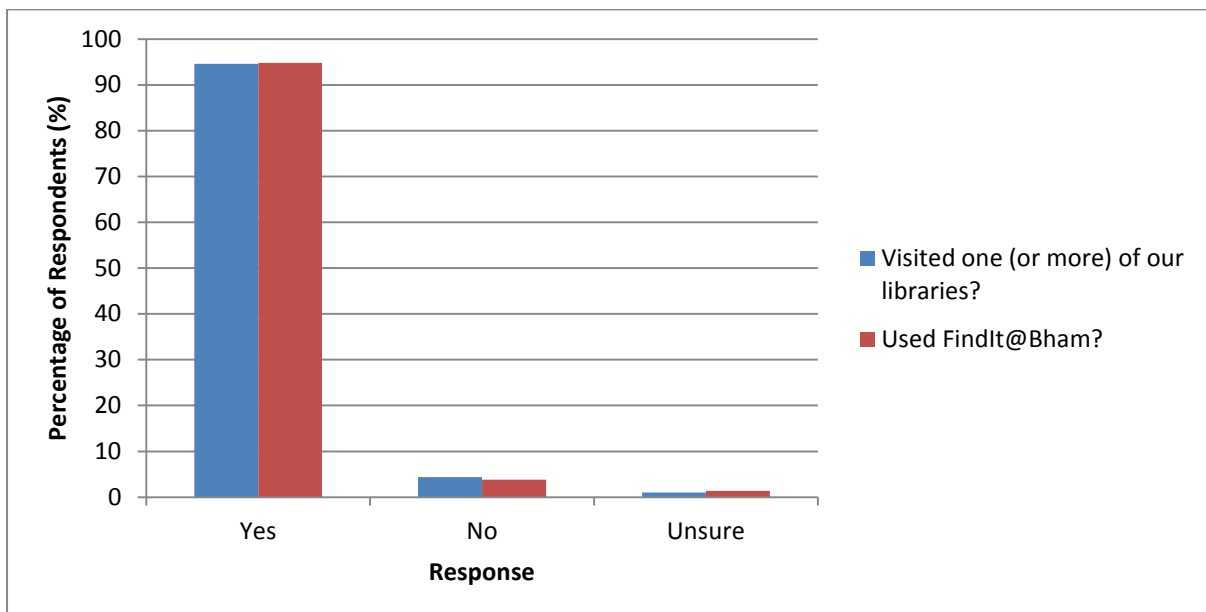
### **Questionnaire Results**

There were 301 responses to the on-stall questionnaire. Figure 4 shows the respondents' level of study.



**Figure 4: Level of study of students who completed the questionnaire**

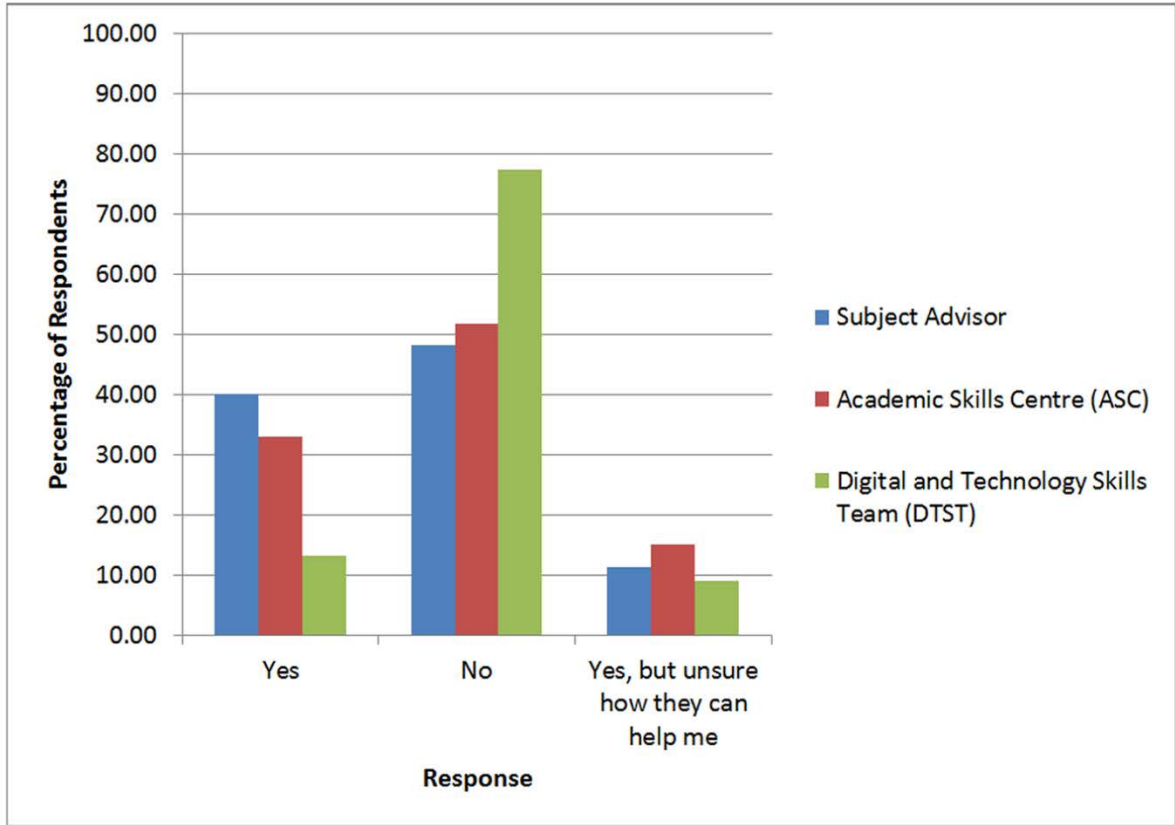
Students were asked whether they had visited one (or more) of the University of Birmingham libraries and whether or not they had used FindIt@Bham, Library Services' Resource Discovery Service (RDS). Figure 5 shows the results.



**Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who had visited one (or more) Library Services libraries and used FindIt@Bham**

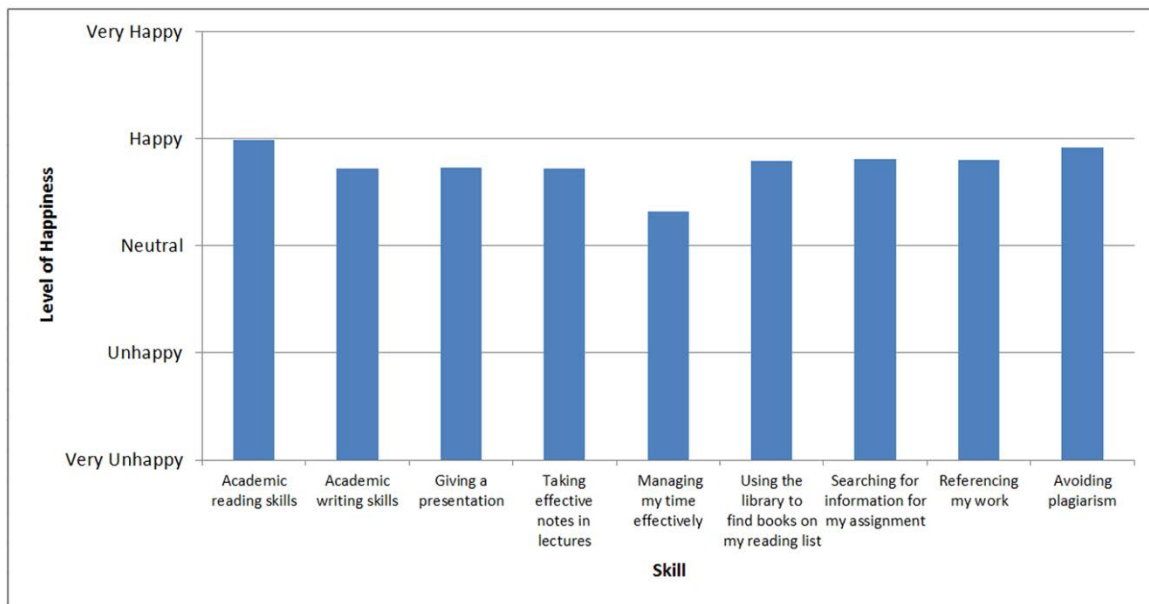
Students were asked whether, prior to visiting the Pop-up Library, they knew that Library Services has a Subject Advisor for their School, an ASC and a DTST. Figure 6 shows the results.





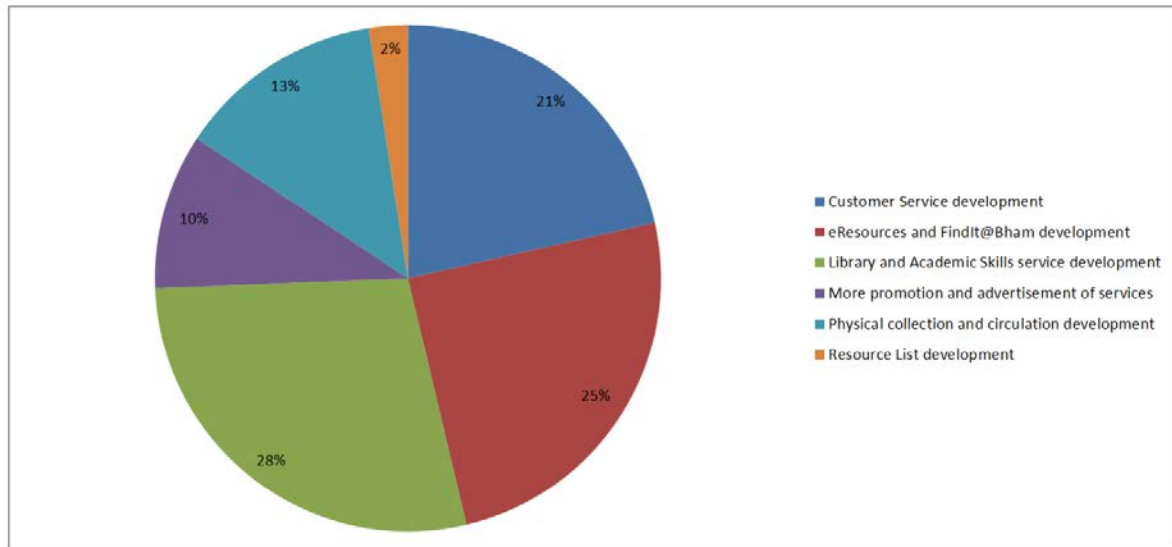
**Figure 6: Awareness amongst students prior to visiting the Pop-up Library of Subject Advisors, Academic Skills Centre and Digital and Technology Skills Team**

Students were asked how they felt about their own skills and to rate them on a 5 point scale between 'Very Happy' and 'Very Unhappy'. The average 'Level of Happiness' for each skill is shown in figure 7.



**Figure 7: Student perceived level of happiness of nine academic, library and research skills**

Students were asked “What one thing could Library Services do to help you more with your learning and/or research?” A range of comments was received, and most were categorised into one of 6 themes shown in Figure 8.



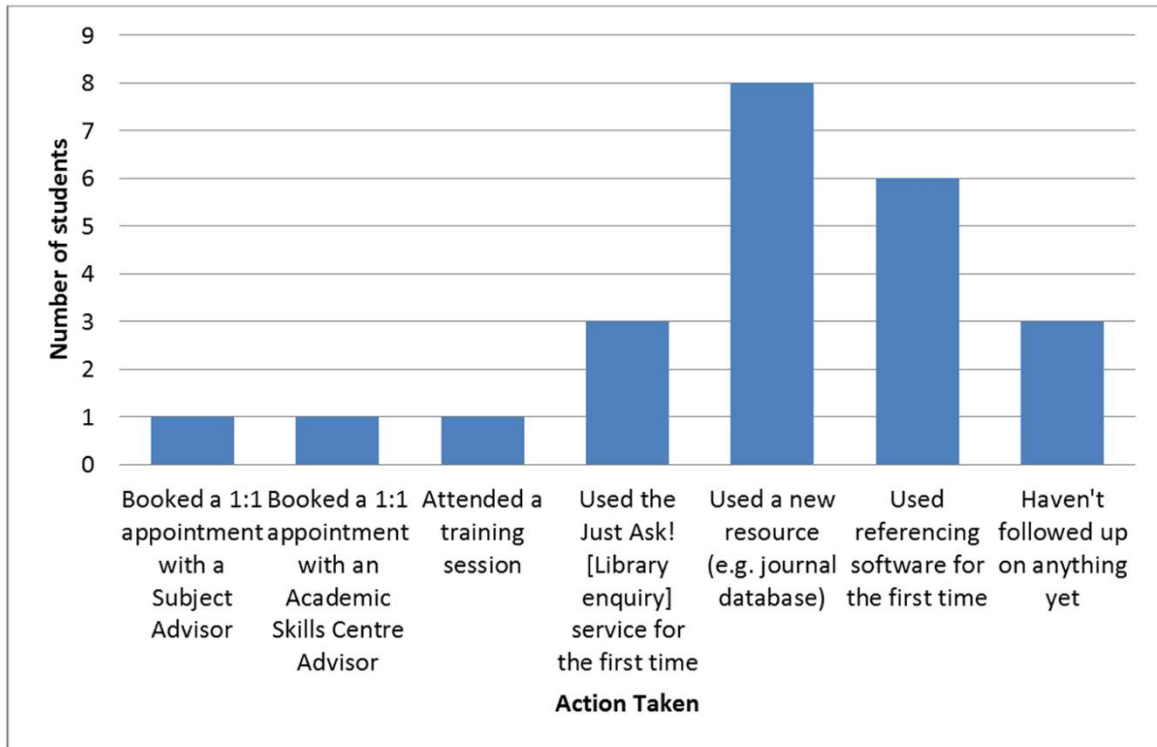
**Figure 8: Themes identified from free-text responses of where Library Services could do more to support learning and research (n=121)**

## Impact Survey

A follow-up Impact Survey was sent out to students who had visited a Pop-up stall, to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative. 15 students responded.

To the question “What one (or more) thing(s) did you learn by visiting Library Services’ Pop-up Library?” all of the respondents indicated that they had learned something new, ranging from the fact that computers are bookable to the existence of Subject Support. Some notable comments included: “How to use the library services when I want to write an essay and where to go for help”; “I’ve learnt there was such a thing as an academic skills centre advisor! I had no idea that service existed before.” One student also commented that the Pop-up Library had provided a welcome chance for them to give feedback on the support currently available.

Secondly, the Impact Survey asked “Have you changed anything or followed anything up as a result of the Pop-up Library?” Responses are shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: Impact Survey: Have you changed anything or followed anything up as a result? (Please select all that apply)**

Finally, the Survey asked: “Do you have any ideas to improve our Pop-up Library and/or do you have any further comments?” Responses to this question were largely positive, with one student writing: “The staff were so friendly and welcoming and the information they gave out was very useful for me!” Another commented: “I thought it was a great idea to promote what services the library can offer, and I hope they will carry on doing it in the future.” Four respondents took the opportunity to reiterate that they had learned something new or discovered support they were not previously aware of.

## Discussion

### Communication / Interactions with students

It is hard to draw conclusions about why some Pop-up events were more successful than others. Indeed, some venues visited on more than one occasion had very different rates of interaction. The following discussion presents some general observations and interpretation of the results.

Firstly, lunchtimes (typically between 11:45am and 2:15pm) worked well and, in many cases, saw a steady flow of conversations. Secondly, the type of location seemed to have an effect: stalls located in teaching/learning spaces saw, on average, the fewest number of interactions per hour (12.2), followed by social spaces (15.6), with mixed spaces seeing the most (20.2). In teaching/learning spaces, students were often focussed on getting to and from lectures; in social spaces, students had more time to stop but their focus was not always on studying; whereas mixed spaces possibly worked best because students were not under such time pressure but were focussed on independent study. Thirdly, the position of the stall within the building was significant. Locations

that were off main routes, had little space to stop, or were drafty were less accessible and appealing to the potential audience. Finally, the staff on the stall may have made a difference: whilst all had been briefed and were happy answering questions from students who approached, some were naturally more proactive in engaging with students beyond the immediate vicinity of the stall.

For Pop-up instances where most of the visiting students were from the same discipline, having the relevant Subject Advisor on the stall was also beneficial. For example, in the busiest Pop-up instance, as described in the Student Common Room case study, having the relevant Subject Advisor on the stall to answer direct questions about subject-specific databases and resources enhanced the quality of the interactions between visitors and staff. Having the stall in a social space, but nonetheless within students' departmental building, seemed to help in striking the right balance between a relaxed atmosphere and targeted study support.

The effectiveness of the Pop-up Library can also be discussed in terms of the potential value of individual interactions. Considering the case study of the Teaching Building Atrium, this Pop-up instance would have been judged as ineffective based on number of interactions alone. However, the impact on the four students was significant, as they received support and guidance at the point of need. This may have been particularly true for the part-time distance learner, who, as an infrequent visitor to campus, would have fewer opportunities to explore and benefit from traditional library support.

Perhaps the more informal nature of the Pop-up Library helps remove the barriers to library use identified by Robinson and Reid (2007). For those groups highlighted as potentially less confident in using formal channels to approach Library Services for support (first-year, postgraduate, part-time and English as Second Language students (Toner, 2008; Beard & Bawden, 2012; Martin et al., 2012)), the Pop-up Library provides an accessible alternative.

## Staffing

Although managing a large rota was challenging, the wide range of staff involved was felt to be a strength of the Pop-up Library. Members of frontline staff were able to contribute their customer service expertise and broad knowledge of Library Services; CMD staff gained direct feedback from students about resources needed for their studies; Subject Advisors provided on-the-spot advice about information searching; and advisors from the ASC and DTST spoke to students about wider study skills. Therefore, stalls staffed by a combination of the above worked well. Staff also enhanced their awareness of other job roles within Library Services, which is likely to improve signposting and cross-promotion in the future.

The external training helped up-skill Pop-up Library facilitators, and feedback suggested they felt more confident in reaching out to students as a result. The training demonstrated how to promote the *benefits* of services rather than just what the services entail, which will also help with marketing Library Services more generally. Pop-up Library staff members were also able to feedback to the organising team at briefing sessions before and during the programme. This allowed them to report successes and problems, so that methodology could be refined, and to share tips and advice about techniques that had worked well for student engagement. Getting staff together also reinforced the idea of a whole-library initiative, which helped with communicating a more cohesive message to students.

There was one element of staffing that could have been developed further. In accordance with Appleton and Abernethy's (2013) work on partnership between libraries and students, having students on the stalls alongside library staff might facilitate informal engagement with other

students even more effectively. The Pop-up Library team is keen to initiate further student involvement in the future.

### Stall, promotional literature and 'freebies'

As Davis et al. (2015) observe, a 'Pop-up Library' provides an opportunity to promote and raise awareness of services. The first impression created by the stall is a key step towards this. It is interesting, therefore, that staff felt the most enticing stalls were those that were well-resourced without becoming cluttered. It is likely that where stalls are packed with 'freebies', promotional literature, decorative banners and so forth, the sheer quantity makes it unclear which services are being promoted. Dubicki's (2009) research indicates that a combination of "Giveaways" and "Contests / monthly drawings" (p. 173) is effective in facilitating interactions that enable staff to "sell the services of the library" (p. 175). Certainly, the use of in-house and Pop-up Library themed promotional items alongside supplier 'freebies' was successful in helping to develop meaningful interactions. Of these, in-house and Pop-up Library themed materials worked consistently well. Supplier 'freebies' worked particularly well when Subject Advisors with expert knowledge of the resources promoted by the supplier 'freebies' were staffing the stall at the time.

### Questionnaire

Approximately one-third of visitors to the Pop-up Library completed a questionnaire. Of these respondents, 48% were first year undergraduate students (see Figure 4). Given that Toner (2008) identified first year undergraduate students as potential non-users of library services, such a high percentage of respondents indicates that the Pop-up Library is a successful communicative mechanism for reaching this cohort. Elsewhere, Beard and Bawden (2012) recognise a significant number of postgraduate students as displaying a lack of awareness of library services and/or an unwillingness to engage with library staff to ask for help. As only 14% of questionnaire respondents were postgraduates (lower than the 32% of postgraduates that make up the University of Birmingham student body (University of Birmingham, 2016)) it could be suggested the Pop-up Library was less effective as a mechanism for engaging postgraduates. However, this figure needs to be considered in the context of anecdotal feedback from staff, who commented that postgraduate visitors to the stall were often more interested in asking specific questions as opposed to engaging with the multi-faceted elements of the Pop-up Library - such as filling out the questionnaire.

The most effective use for the questionnaire was the opportunity to receive direct feedback from students. This provided interesting insights into three areas: student awareness of key library services; student satisfaction with their academic skills; and student thoughts on the ways Library Services can support learning and research.

Dalal and Lackie's (2014) study suggests that an awareness of the "most expensive resources and services" is often lacking among students, including the Resource Discovery tool (p. 227). However, as Figure 5 shows, with approximately 95% of respondents having used FindIt@Bham, a lack of awareness of the RDS is not characteristic of this University of Birmingham sample. However, when the sample's awareness of services is examined on a more granular level, results are less clear cut. Figure 6 indicates that approximately 50% were aware of their Subject Advisor and ASC prior to attending a Pop-up Library, which is encouraging. However, of those, approximately 10-15% were unsure how these services could help them. Arguably, communication initiatives such as the Pop-up Library are needed to increase students' understanding of how these services can support them. Figure 6 also reveals that less than 25% of respondents were aware of DTST. While lower than comparative scores for Subject Advisors and ASC, the DTST provide a relatively new strand of service delivery within Library Services. It is envisaged that awareness amongst students will rise as the service becomes more established.

The questionnaire also provided useful feedback on students' confidence levels for skills that Subject Advisors and ASC support (Figure 7). Interestingly, the average level of happiness was between 'Neutral' and 'Happy' for each skill, with only 'Managing my time effectively' being closer to 'Neutral' than 'Happy'. It could be theorised that only half of the respondents were aware of services supporting the development of academic, library and research skills because their high confidence levels result in a perception that they do not need to seek out such services.

Arguably, the need to promote the Subject Advisor and ASC services to students who are unaware of them but nevertheless happy with the skills they support is less pressing. However, this is only true if the happiness levels of a student are commensurate with their actual proficiency. Research by Gross (2005) and later Gross and Latham (2007; 2011; 2012) suggests that students – particularly first-years – have lower levels of information literacy than they themselves estimate. A student indicating they are happy with a particular skill may be in just as much need of the support of Subject Advisor, ASC and DTS services as an unhappy student. Consequently, the need to promote services helping to identify, support and develop academic skills through mediums such as the Pop-up Library remains.

Lastly, the 6 categories of qualitative feedback illustrated by Figure 8 reflect Library Services projects and initiatives that were either concurrent to the Pop-up Library (Resource List development; physical collection and circulation development), or had been recently implemented (eResources and FindIt@Bham development). This indicates that Library Services is already sensitive to the service needs of students, and having this affirmed is a positive outcome of using the questionnaire.

## Advertising the Pop-up Library

As discussed, there is some debate over whether Pop-ups should be advertised in advance, or whether the element of surprise is more effective. Davis et al. (2015, p. 97) suggest that a stall should be "unexpected in the space it occupies, thus generating a buzz." However, a respondent to the University of Birmingham's Impact Survey commented that it would be a good idea to "advertise when and where they [Pop-Up instances] will be held so questions can be thought of before."

A buzz was certainly felt in the most successful Pop-up instances, and many of the team's best interactions were with students who had no idea that the Pop-up Library was going to be there. There is no evidence to suggest that any of the students who visited the stall did so because they had seen it advertised on social media. However, lecture announcements did seem to encourage students to visit the stall on their way out of nearby lecture halls. Perhaps advertising on the day, close to the location, helps contribute to a feeling of the Library 'popping up' almost spontaneously, which could be more appealing than an event that appears heavily pre-planned.

## Impact Survey

Although the number of responses was low, the Impact Survey provided further evidence of students benefitting from the Pop-up Library. 12 of the 15 respondents took positive action as a result of information received via a Pop-up, such as booking appointments with specialist library staff, exploring a new resource or database, or using the library enquiry system for the first time (see Figure 9). This is further emphasised by comments such as: "I've learnt there was such a thing as an academic skills centre advisor! I had no idea that service existed before", and "[I learned about] the resources available specific to the Department. Didn't know of that!"

This supports the view that the Pop-up Library is an effective communication tool. Whereas library enquiry services are able to answer specific questions raised by students, the Pop-Up Library can

engage with them pro-actively and informally, which can lead to students discovering answers to questions they may not have thought to ask. The prevalence of Impact Survey responses such as “had no idea that service existed before”; “can access certain information... more easily than I thought” highlights the role of the Pop-up Library in raising awareness of resources and support.

The ‘further comments/suggestions for improvement’ question also prompted one student to remark on the friendliness of the staff on the stall. This underlines the importance of personnel to the success of an initiative such as this, supporting Penner’s (2011) view that the key to “any Roving Librarian project should be very simple: be approachable” (p. 29). This could have a positive effect beyond the Pop-up Library, in breaking down barriers between Library Services and students.

## Conclusion / Recommendations

In terms of communicative impact, a Pop-up Library is effective in two ways. Firstly, it proactively promotes to students the multifarious ways an academic library can support learning and research. This encourages non-users to engage, while showing active users additional services they may have been unaware of, or not grasped the utility of. Secondly, a Pop-up Library programme enables a library to receive feedback from students, to gauge how they feel about the learning and research skills the library supports, as well as how effective the libraries’ services, resources and facilities are in achieving that support.

Organisations interested in setting up a Pop-up Library programme may find the following recommendations useful:

### Locations and Timings

- Target ‘mixed’ locations (those spaces with teaching/learning and social spaces in close proximity), which are more likely to be populated by students not under time pressure to attend lectures/seminars, but whose focus is not purely on socialising.
- Where teaching/learning spaces are targeted, staff the stall with a Subject Librarian who supports the department(s) whose cohorts are being taught at the time.
- Pop-up instances held over lunchtimes are most effective in terms of generating a high quantity of interactions.
- Consider whether to advertise your Pop-up instances via social media. It is difficult to measure whether advertising increases the impact of a Pop-up Library as there is evidence to suggest the element of surprise is more effective (Davis et al., 2015).

### Staffing

- Involve staff from across the divisions of your library services. This will provide comprehensive support for students as well as increase staff awareness of other library roles.
- Where possible, utilise an external company to enhance the promotion and engagement skills of staff manning the stalls.

- Hold briefing and debriefing sessions with staff involved. This does not have to be intensive, but can provide clarity to staff as to what is expected of them when running a stall. Debriefing sessions can provide an opportunity to receive useful feedback.
- Consider recruiting students to help staff stalls, as there is evidence to suggest library and student partnerships increase overall student engagement (Appleton & Abernethy, 2013; Mangrum & West, 2012; Walton, 2010).

## Stall and Resources

- Try not to overstock the stall. While promotional freebies and literature are important to invite and develop meaningful interactions with students, a stall that has too much on display might obscure purpose.
- Try and resource the stall with freebies and literature directly relevant to your services. If possible, develop your own 'freebies' that help develop the identity of both your Pop-up Library programme, and your library service.
- Encourage staff to use promotional resources as a segue into conversation with students.

## Student Feedback and Impact

- Using a questionnaire on the stall represents a good source of quantifiable feedback and student take-up will be high if an incentive (e.g. prize draw) is attached to filling out the questionnaire.
- Design your questionnaire around the aspects of your service you would like to know more about. Leave an open qualitative question for respondents to provide feedback on aspects of the library service important to them.
- Following up a student's visit to the Pop-up Library with a well-timed Impact Survey can provide useful data to measure the impact of your Pop-up Library programme.

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