 **Annual Conference 2024**

**Stop, Start, Continue: reimagining and creating sustainable library services for the future**

 Conference Speakers & Abstracts

**Keynote: Jim Dickinson Associate Director (SU’s) WonkHE**

Jim is an Associate Editor (SUs) at Wonkhe and takes a particular interest in student experience, university governance, and regulation – and leads our work with students’ unions.

His career background is in support for student leadership. He has held senior roles at the National Union of Students – where he led on SU development, campaigns and political strategy – and was the CEO at the SU at UEA, providing strategic management for the union’s charitable and commercial vehicles as well as policy support for the elected student officers.

Jim has served as a governor and trustee in both further and higher education and the voluntary sector, and is a regular speaker at sector events and conferences. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, an obsessive fan of the Eurovision Song Contest, and dreams of visiting Moldova.

**Getting creative: How to engage with students on a shoestring budget.**

**Elena Kosmala** [**elena.kosmala@roehampton.ac.uk**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Celena.kosmala%40roehampton.ac.uk) **University of Roehampton**

This presentation will focus how using creative ideas to design fun events to engage with students doesn’t need a big budget**.**

**Igniting Innovative New Services - The University of Bath’s Library Spark Student Competition**

**Chris Roberts** [**liscr@bath.ac.uk**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Cliscr%40bath.ac.uk) **University of Bath**

Library Spark was a student engagement project run by the Library at University of Bath in early 2024. Inspired by the University of York’s LibInspo competition, it challenged students to suggest new innovative services for the Library to provide. To encourage student engagement a first prize was £1000 was offered. A bold advertisement campaign was developed which resulted in 60 entries. Shortlisting posed challenges as the quality of entries was so high and diverse. Six finalists were shortlisted and presented their ideas to an audience of library staff, senior University management and the SU President. The winning entry was Library Lawn, an outdoor study area with shaded seating, power points and water fountains. Analysis of the entries shows that students are looking for contemporary, well lit flexible spaces to study with greenery and access to food and drink facilities. New services like sound-proof booths for online interviews, shared creative spaces and research information sharing facilities were also strong recurrent themes. Two soundproof booths have already been installed in the Library. The development of Library Lawn is a complex project, and the Library will be working with students and staff in the Architecture Department during the 24/25 academic year to bring it into existence.

**The impact of SCONUL Access on distance learning success**

**Helen Clough,** **helen.clough@open.ac.uk** **Open University**

Library Services at The Open University (OU) conducted research exploring the impact of SCONUL Access (partner library) membership on our distance learning students’ engagement and academic achievement.

We found that a higher percentage of students who were members of SCONUL Access gained a distinction (32%) in comparison to students who weren’t a member (22%). In the second phase of our research, most students (62%, n=320) reported that being part of the scheme has a positive impact by supporting their studies and wellbeing.

Comments about the scheme’s importance in supporting academic success and enhancing the student experience appeared in both the survey and interview data, e.g. "The SCONUL Access scheme gave me the opportunity to find a welcoming, positive and quiet place in which to study. As a low income, distance learning student, I feel this has been instrumental in my successes so far as an OU student."

This presentation links to the topic ‘Are you collaborating or converging with other services in your organisation or externally?’. It is an example of external collaboration to provide distance learning students with access to high-quality study space, which helps them to feel part of a learning community and is linked to better outcomes.

**For Staff, By Staff: A Learning & Development Group**

**Aoife Murphy** [**aoife.murphy@dcu.ie**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Caoife.murphy%40dcu.ie) **and Nuala Murray** [**nuala.murray@dcu.ie**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Cnuala.murray%40dcu.ie) **Dublin City University**

In a recent article, the World Economic Forum released their top skills for workers with analytical and creative thinking topping the bill; soft skills such as flexibility, resilience and self-awareness are also required.  Moreover, in an increasingly changing library landscape, staff must constantly update their skills in order to assist our diverse community of users.

With this in mind, DCU Library assembled an innovative Learning and Development Working Group.  In line with the Library's Learning and Development Policy, the group aims to promote a culture of continuous learning, enhancing staff skills, knowledge, and expertise to keep pace with technological advancements.  Comprising members from all grades and Directorates ensures diverse perspectives and comprehensive support.  It identifies common development needs, evaluates the effectiveness of current learning and development practices and recognises the importance of CPD in improving the library environment at both micro and macro levels.

The LDWG hosts opportunities for staff to share knowledge, enhance their presentation skills and foster professional growth through an annual all staff learning day.  Currently, we are reviewing our induction policy and exploring peer-led shadowing of other Directorates.

Staff engagement has been vital in achieving our objectives and continues to shape future strategic planning.

**Development and progression in Customer Services**

**Maria Carnegie** **maria.a.carnegie@durham.ac.uk** **Durham University**

In a recent staff engagement survey in our Department, career development and progression was identified as a particular theme focus on within the Customer Services Team. This team has a wide grade range; and similarly with lots of CS teams, has people on the lower grades within the department; often working part-time and out of core hours shifts. There are a mix of those who are very happy with their posts and “don’t want to progress”, alongside those who are early career and want to move on. Providing opportunities and support that meet expectations of the team can be challenging, especially in times of more restricted budgets and recruitment. It certainly encourages creative approaches.  I’ll share headlines from the survey, some of the challenges and possible ways forwards. This will provide an introduction to a short workshop on this theme to share and discuss what people in the room have tried – failures as well as successes – as a learning opportunity and hopefully some new ideas to take away!

**Bringing retail customer service experience to the virtual engagement within the Library and Student Centre model at the University of Westminster.**

**Charlene John** [**c.john1@westminster.ac.uk**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Cc.john1%40westminster.ac.uk) **and Iulia Cinpoes** [**i.cinpoes@westminster.ac.uk**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Ci.cinpoes%40westminster.ac.uk) **University of Westminster**

Bringing retail customer service experience to the virtual engagement within the Library and Student Centre model at the University of Westminster.

This presentation will focus on the shift to digital engagement for our students and virtual customer service skills following the merge between the Library Customer Centre team and the Student Centre.

1.      Responding to the shift from ‘on campus’ engagement to ‘virtual’ post-pandemic

2.      Can you still provide ‘excellence’ when your ‘non-verbal communication’ is lost

3.      Retraining library assistants to respond to students need

4.  Library space or ‘students’ learning space – is there a difference?

5.      How important is digital customer experience for today’s customers?

**Building an AI Chatbot to Support Information Provision to Students**

**Brenda Welch** **bwelch@ed.ac.uk** **and Karen Bonthron k**[**aren.bonthron@ed.ac.uk,**](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cuxyl010%5CDownloads%5Caren.bonthron%40ed.ac.uk%2C) **University of Edinburgh**

In the first AI project of its kind at the University of Edinburgh, the EdHelp team have worked with our internal centre for data and digital expertise (EDINA) to develop a chatbot to assist students with informational queries.  Based in our 10 libraries, EdHelp provides front-line support not only for Library queries but also for IT, Student Finance and Student Administration.  This session will look at how we have used AI to deliver a chatbot that improves the student experience of searching for information.  We will consider the ethical implications, using an existing knowledge base to train the Large Language Model, student experience testing, quality control, moderation, and student wellbeing.  We will also discuss the implications for staff and engaging staff in the process of developing AI tools, as well as other aspects of developing an AI chatbot for student use.

**Enhancing Customer Experience with AI: Queen's University Belfast's Library Chatbot**

**Robert Whan** **robert.whan@qub.ac.uk** **and Richard Stitt** **richard.stitt@qub.ac.uk** **Queen’s University Belfast**

In response to evolving student needs and the increasing demand for efficient Library services, Queen’s University Belfast has developed an AI-powered chatbot to revolutionise the customer experience. This innovative solution aims to provide 24/7 assistance, addressing common queries and facilitating access to library resources with unprecedented ease. Developed over a six-month period by a dedicated team from QUB Digital Transformation (DX) and Library staff, the chatbot leverages advanced natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning technologies. Its text-based interface offers seamless interaction, guiding users through frequently asked questions, library resource navigation and common IT queries. The AI responses are monitored closely for accuracy and can be calibrated accordingly. Since its launch, the chatbot has significantly improved response times, alleviated staff workload, and garnered positive feedback for its user-friendly interface and effectiveness. Students and staff have particularly appreciated the quick, accurate assistance available during out of hours. Looking ahead, we plan to expand the chatbot's knowledge base, enhance its conversational abilities, add it to the student app and introduce voice recognition features. By continuously adapting to technological advancements and user needs, we aim to maintain an exceptional library experience for all.