
Unafraid of the future – Edinburgh’s next generation library and information services

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Abstract:

Edinburgh library and information services have undergone a period of fundamental and wide reaching change to ensure it is fit for purpose in the 21st century. Libraries have achieved a high standard of excellence in the provision of information, reading, learning, and access to cultural and recreational services. The city of Edinburgh’s library and information service is delivering a new model for libraries across the city, based on a strategic approach which borrows from the retail sector and called “next generation library and information services”.

Edinburgh recognises how effectively pushing the boundaries of public service delivery, creates more cost effective estates, builds stronger communities and promotes economic vitality through our 28 libraries. Driving a vision as hybrid libraries, which are a combination of a conventional library and a new electronic network library.

To do all of this Edinburgh library and information service needed to consolidate the building blocks for change and scalability through the use of practical toolkits to support new ways of working and embed performance improvement

As UK best library and information service 2012, uk public sector digital awards finalist and 3 times libraries change lives winner our cutting-edge use of technology and innovative use of electronic information and social media is changing the way we deliver services and increasing performance City of Edinburgh library service is bucking the trend and we have built 2 innovative new library hubs in Drumbrae and Craigmillar as ideal examples of the model of future services for us. Innovation in interior designs has also made our spaces much more targeted and attractive. Other new refurbished libraries are bright and welcoming environment with new heating systems, improved lighting levels, redecoration, new zoned flooring, and modern internal design including vinyl window graphics, large-scale photographic wall images and a simple signage solution.

Keywords: Edinburgh, Library and Information Services, Hubs, Innovation, Hybrid

Purpose

The paper seeks to describe how Edinburgh library and information services have developed during a period of fundamental and wide reaching change to ensure it is fit for purpose in the 21st century.

The paper provides a descriptive overview of the development of the service, detailing the planning of 5 very different models of service delivery and the subsequent community reaction.

This paper suggests that further research needs to be done into library-created spaces designed for specific communities and the impact that has on those communities. It is of practical use for library services strategic planning on the development of their estates and wider role in community development.

The paper looks at the impact of successful digital strategies on the developing “hybrid” nature of the public library and the impact that has on capacity and resource to create tailored, unique spaces. The paper also looks at the public library as single point of community content and content provider “hub”.

Introduction

Edinburgh has a vibrant literary life, home to the world’s largest book festival, the national copyright library, the National Library of Scotland, the majority of Scotland’s publishing industry. Edinburgh was designated a UNESCO World City of Literature and has a vibrant literary sub-culture of public readings, readers and writers groups, not least the newly instigated “Edinburgh Reads” at the Central Library, which has proved highly successful.

The City Council of Edinburgh recognises how effectively pushing the boundaries of public service delivery can create a more cost-effective estates, build stronger communities and promote economic vitality through our network of 28 libraries. Driving a new vision as hybrid libraries, which are a combination of a conventional library and our innovative electronic library. To do all of this Edinburgh library and information service needed to consolidate the building blocks for change and scalability through the use of practical toolkits to support new ways of working and embed performance improvement

Edinburgh’s Libraries and Information Services (ECLIS) have achieved a high standard of excellence in the provision of information, reading, learning, and access to cultural and recreational services and now ECLIS is delivering a new model for libraries across the city, based on a strategic approach which borrows from the retail sector and called “next generation library and information services”.

At the heart of Edinburgh’s Library and Information Services are our customers. By shaping our service according to people’s needs, we are driving forward constant change, delivering dynamic, award winning services and pushing the boundaries of what our library services can achieve and deliver. This was recognised when we won UK Library Service of the Year 2012 at the Bookseller Industry Awards.

ECLIS plays a vital role across the city, located in the heart of communities providing free access to reading, media, IT and information services to citizens of all ages. Services are delivered in a variety of ways to meet the needs of customers including 27 Community

Libraries, The Central Library, The Virtual Library, The Prison Library, The Mobile Library, Interpretation & Translation Services and services to prison, hospitals secure and care homes. In the UK government and local councils are driving change to seek more efficient ways of delivering innovative, customer focused services, within a challenging financial context. The service faces unprecedented change as user demands and expectations develop in line with technological advances and an increasing proportion of books and resources are created digitally rather than in print. This is taking us in a direction that was unimaginable even a few years ago

Catalysts for change

- Changing customer demands and expectations
- The need for joined up working to meet citywide outcomes
- Public sector funding pressures
- The need to refresh some of our library buildings
- An increasing proportion of books and resources being created electronically rather than in print
- The shift to mobile technology and The Web revolutionising the way customers work
- Our developing key role in learning and employability

Challenging economic circumstances require that we work in partnership to deliver city wide outcomes and make best use of our buildings and resources.

Our vision - Better libraries, better lives

Public libraries are recognised here as enduring beacons for Edinburgh, raising the city's international profile and achieving excellence with local communities. Viewed as accessible and welcoming to all and reaching out to some of the city's most disadvantaged citizens. Universal meeting places, hubs for the region, engines for the knowledge and creative economies. Through written, printed, audio, visual and interactive resources and technologies our public libraries link the people of Edinburgh to the world, bringing the world to Edinburgh. Library and information services built on excellent customer service, providing a service in spaces which inspire our customers and supports strong community connections.

Our key outcomes

- Access to library and information services through neighbourhood hubs
- Buildings fit for purpose, in the right place
- Innovative and excellent 24/7 electronic access to library services
- Improved literacy and digital skills and enhanced love of reading
- Effective use of technology to deliver service improvements
- Empowered and motivated staff delivering excellent customer service
- Best Value from resources and assets through partnership arrangements,
- Innovation, income generation and new ways of working
- Increased customer base supported by clear marketing and promotion of the service



Innovation

Public libraries in Edinburgh are now about much more than books we are about digital, social and of course physical innovation. Recent technological innovation has enabled us to create new services, such as virtual reference, e-books, personalised Online Public Access Catalogue interfaces and downloadable media that customers can use in their own home - a true 24 hour offering.

Libraries are fabulous! They all come to the table with a wealth of assets:

- Free community and networking spaces
- Free technology resources
- Connections to the local economy
- A sense of ownership by the community
- A high level of community trust.

With these assets, we connect to all parts of a community, building relationships and networks that contribute to a strong social infrastructure, potentially very important community engagement catalysts

Digital

Our vision of a hybrid library is a combination of a conventional library and our virtual library - **Your Library**. Your library brings together all of Edinburgh's online library services from language learning to e-book downloads. Customers can join, renew or reserve stock, find out about events, interact with and comment on services using Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and our blog. Over 4 million transactions were recorded during 2012-13.



Edinburgh's library app is the first of its kind in the UK, and we keep innovating to meet the changing demands of our customers and realise a modern, efficient and dynamic service.

The Library App uses the same infrastructure and content management systems as our network of plasma screens in libraries. This infrastructure is also used to deliver the same content to our blog, Facebook, and You Tube sites without the need to repackage or reformat for each.

The app provides a number of key features

- The ability to find the nearest library, locate it on a map or get directions from your current location.
- Bus Trackers information and First Bus timetable information for Edinburgh area.
- Dynamic service information updates e.g. closures due to bad weather
- Library events and activities information.
- Allows users to scan a barcode in a shop and automatically search the library catalogue.



Physical

Our buildings and ambience needed also to match the requirements of a 21st Century audience. The service is determined to meet the needs of Edinburgh's communities, focusing local Council services within our library buildings. This provides a more efficient and accessible way to deliver services and engage with residents who need our services the most.

Key catalysts for change in the way we think of presenting our services

Shift

- Books to digital
- Reference to open access

Key developments

- Wi - Fi
- RFID
- Workstations
- Laptop issue
- Learning spaces
- Libraries as meeting spaces/ Living rooms

Main report

Our recognised success, improved performance and can do attitude has imbued the Council with confidence in the service and this has in turn led to investment in a new library hub in Drumbrae and a second in Craigmillar. They are ideal models of the model of future services for us.

Innovation in interior design across 19 of our other libraries has also made spaces much more targeted and attractive. Other new refurbished libraries are bright and welcoming environment with new heating systems, improved lighting levels, redecoration, new zoned flooring, and modern internal design including vinyl window graphics, large-scale photographic wall images and a simple electronic signage solution.

Community hubs integrated local services

Traditionally the core of the library service has been within stand alone library buildings across the City. This physical presence will remain at the heart of the service but with the focus on libraries as an integral part of Community Hub facilities.

The “Hub” approach has seen the development of libraries as part of a joint service at local level where the community can access a range of neighbourhood and information services; a seamless delivery model which provides best value use of physical buildings and assets within the community. Hubs involve cross-council services as well as a shared service opportunity with other partners.

In developing and integrating this dynamic model across library services a range of approaches has been necessary. In Craigmillar and Drumbrae we have utilised new build opportunities. Looking forward, links will continue to be established and developed to identify potential opportunities to provide library services as part of any new developments either alongside other Council services or in partnership with other agencies. Morningside is an old Carnegie building beautifully refurbished to retain traditional grandeur and our L4U young people’s spaces are designed by the customers themselves

Our toolkit for design ensured that when people see our new or refurbished spaces they will describe it as:

Wow!

- Buzzing
- Exciting
- Stimulating
- Inspiring
- Retaining the beauty of the traditional in harmony with the future

They see our spaces as

- Surprising
- Bringing books to life digitally through new electronic media and images
- Exhibition and event spaces
- Easy and clear to orientate
- Bright

- Modern
- Creative
- Noisy
- Quiet
- Open to all

The spaces are described as

- Flexible
- Fluid spaces identified by display furniture, colour and signage
- Fantastic
- Flowing from noisy and lively to quiet and peaceful
- Facilitating browsing

They will be child and family friendly, at the leading edge of change and transformation in future library services. People visit libraries for a multitude of reasons, reflecting broader changes in society. For example, increased life spans and more fragmented families lead to demands for better access to information on health, parenting and childcare; the internet revolution has led to a massive demand for access to resources through ICT.

This paper will look at 5 very different approaches to models of implementation and the reasoning behind them

- **Craigmillar** – A new build “ library hub” - a gateway Council access and access to wider local government services and information
- **Drumrae** – A new build “ library hub” a gateway combined with Adult day care services and access to wider local government services and information
- **Saughton Prison** – User designed refurbishment. Designed and built by in partnership with HMP Saughton to deliver an award winning prison library service. With high usage and the development of a multi-agency literacy group for prisoners and their families, our service delivers long term benefits
- **Morningside** – Old Carnegie building revitalised for the 21st century
- **L4U** - Designed, furnished and branded by the young people in disadvantaged communities

Craigmillar Library

This is the new Craigmillar hybrid Library hub fully integrated with neighbourhood and partner services now a centre of excellence for learning, information and community cohesion. We had a unique opportunity to change the cultural, social and physical face of Craigmillar forever and the Library in Craigmillar symbolises Edinburgh’s investment in the area’s community identity. The new hub has caught the imagination of the community and injected vitality and magic into the local area.

Our strategy is to create engaging shop fronts (Hybrids of virtual, physical, personal) for story, imagination, information, and learning. Libraries have always been about learning, it’s simply part of the inherent value of books.

Bespoke elements were integrated with high quality, robust furniture and fittings creating a facility that all ages can explore and enjoy. We created smaller reading alcoves and meeting alcoves within the larger spaces using curved shelving and built in seating on the inner face. These featured graphic backdrops with bustling café intuitive furnishings.

Our customers told us clearly they expect a quality experience when using our services, a vibrant, bright welcoming space providing a modern environment with the opportunity for reading, activities, relaxation, enjoyment, information and learning.”



Drumbrae Library

is another new build hybrid library hub for neighbourhood services;

- A day care centre for older people
- A learning centre
- A community resource
- Support for small businesses
- A memory bank
- A cyber-entry point
- A base for enterprise, innovation and regeneration.
- A destination for leisure and culture

Bold graphics and bursts of colour, together with free wi-fi and easy access to all areas it is a new and inviting space encouraging customers to relax and linger or study, an exemplification of future trends in libraries, the design created spaces conducive to digital reading and learning, to social interaction and maximum impact from the gallery.



Saughton Prison Library

Saughton prison library won a prestigious award for its "life-changing" impact on inmates. The library, which opened at Saughton Prison in November 2008, is the only one in Scotland with a waiting list.

Some 12,500 prisoners passed through its doors in the first year and damage to library books has reduced from 80% to zero since it opened. Housed in a purpose-built extension, the library includes designs and fittings that were created and built by prisoners. Images of bright green open spaces – clearly a place prisoner would want to use. This project demonstrates and

evidences 'changing lives', and has made a huge impact on all the prisoners and the staff working in the prison.



Morningside

Morningside Library is an old Carnegie Library which was no longer fit for purpose. The revamp, was shaped by the views of more than 800 library users, who completed a questionnaire asking what new facilities they wanted to see in their local library.

The refurbished Morningside Library provides modern interior design and shelving, soft seating, a coffee area, study space, community rooms, computer learning centre, improved internal lighting, the long-awaited customer toilets and new and improved areas for children and teenagers. The building is also now accessible on two levels for the first time, creating much more space to be used by the community. The Library has been beautifully modernised and reconfigured so that it can now properly cater to all its customers' needs.



L4U – youth spaces

Libraries in some disadvantaged areas had suffered from an increasing amount of antisocial behaviour involving young people. The staff team, together with a number of key partners, tackled problems head on by adopting an inclusive and ground-breaking approach to working with excluded children and teenagers.

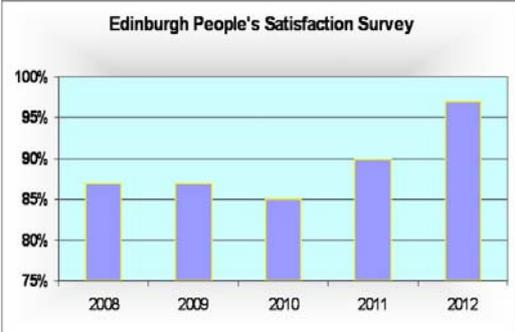
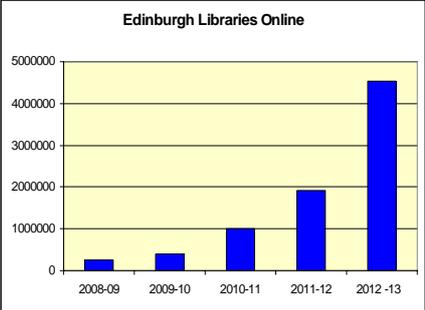
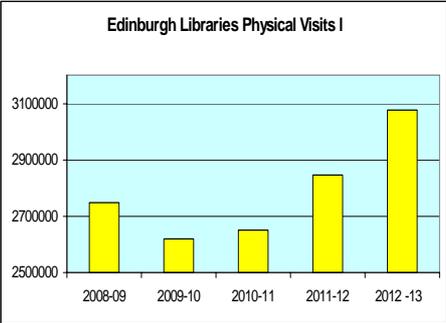
From being plagued by disruptive behaviour, under-age drinking and vandalism, they adopted a new inclusive approach, where they engaged more positively with young people. Together with many partners, including Lothian and Borders Police and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, they delivered a programme of imaginative reading, IT and arts activities such as a Computer Crazies Club, a football literacy project and graffiti arts events. Since then, the trouble in the area has dropped dramatically – a 60% reduction in recorded antisocial incidents in the community and the library has won an award from the Scottish Executive Standing Up To Antisocial Behaviour Scheme

The Service now has 6 Libraries 4 Youth projects in the city bringing an entirely new look and feel to those libraries in disadvantaged areas. Designed, furnished and branded by the young people in those communities. Now relaxing, teen friendly and open space is available for young people to pursue their interests through new books, Graphic novels, DVDs, Playstations and Wii games in the modern Libraries4Youth zone. Special male mentoring, DJ workshops and beauty events feature. By making space for young people to read and relax in their own “Teen Zone” there has been an increase in visits and borrowing of library items, improvement in young people’s behaviour and a positive response from the local community.



The L4Us successfully remove many barriers contributing to the social exclusion of young people, giving them the opportunity to access services that have helped them to develop reading, literacy, learning and life skills

Performance and impact



We recognise that Performance measurement is central to library management, since without a firm grasp on what is actually being achieved it is impossible to move forward to improved service —or even to maintain the status quo

Investment in our buildings, design and spaces coupled with digital innovation and services for disadvantaged groups has clearly shown results. Visitors, satisfaction and digital usage show excellent upward trends with 97% customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

There are many diverse communities in the City of Edinburgh and this paper has outlined our approaches to just some of them, all of which are underpinned by our 24/7 virtual library.

Tailoring buildings, design and layout in public libraries alongside innovative digital services and new technology has had a clear impact on performance, usage, behaviour and service take up. It has also clearly impacted on sense of community and a sense of investment in those communities.

Working with partners and other information and community learning providers to deliver hybrid/ hub spaces has made service provision more affordable and indeed relevant to individual communities.

Never has there been a better time to be involved in libraries, especially if you understand that digital developments and new technology are far from a threat. Rather they provide new opportunities for us to re-imagine ourselves, our spaces and to provide innovative new services