CoLRiC

Council for Learning Resources in Colleges

# IMPACT

2021 - 2022 Issue 3

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The voice of Further Education and Sixth Form College Libraries and Learning Resource Services

# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third CoLRiC Impact of the 2021/22 academic year. This issue offers an eclectic mix of features and topics, and we're celebrating spring with some great CoLRiC initiatives, including the 2022 call for applications and nominations of our prestigious awards and the launch of our free members' only online seminar programme. We'd be delighted to receive your feedback, suggestions and comments on any of the articles in this issue. Please keep an eye out for 'Coping with Covid' where we have some questions for you about the impact of the pandemic on library and learning resource services. We hope to collate your responses and publish a report later this year. For your convenience, we've also published an updated list of CoLRiC member benefits to ensure that you get the most out of your institutional membership. Please don't hesitate to get back to us if you require further advice and information.

Systems librarians and IT professionals often say 'garbage in, garbage out', highlighting the impact 'bad data' can have on service delivery and the user experience. CoLRiC sponsor IS Oxford articulates the negative impact of untidy data in a range of areas including resource discoverability, library and learning resource services credibility, data protection and informed, evidence-based resource acquisition. Emma Duffield, Sales Manager at IS Oxford, writes about data integrity and system housekeeping tools, encouraging CoLRiC members to check out IS Oxford's Data Tidy service.

Bolton College was commended for its submission to the CoLRiC Innovative Practice Award in 2021. In this issue Janette Davies, Learning Resource Centre Assistant at the College, showcases the library's contribution to Bolton's 'digital college' agenda. Like many organisations, the Covid pandemic and subsequent first lockdown catalysed and accelerated the transition to digital, and the LRC at Bolton was compelled to reflect on its contribution to the College's digital strategy. This article showcases developments over the last two years. One notable change has been the permanent transition to a hybrid delivery of student induction, blending face to face with online support.

***'We find that face-to-face contact helps to build a rapport with users, enables them to know where we are and to feel comfortable in our environment. Online elements ensure everyone receives the same information and allow learners to revisit sections if necessary'***

Helen Sherwood, Senior Librarian, Wakefield College (part of the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group) and Editor of CoLRiC Impact, shares her HR experiences of trying to recruit successfully during a pandemic. Covid 'changed a lot of things for a lot of people. This was very apparent in the workplace and Wakefield College was no exception. By the summer of 2021 we were three team members down, with another coming up to retirement. We needed to recruit…' Helen writes about the challenges of the recruitment lifecycle, the uptake of digital solutions like Teams and the organisation and management of socially distanced, remote interviews.

This issue's 'Spotlight on…' profile feature is very much a group effort, focusing on Amelia Cuffy-Nash, Emily Duckett and Laura Pickard who are new Library Officers at The Manchester College. Interestingly, none of them have a library services background. The applicant selection process focused on experience in customer care, training, education support and working with young people, rather than specific library experience or qualifications, so this makes for a thought-provoking read. They explain their motivations for working in libraries, their aspirations and experiences and challenges, to date. Look out too for all the latest CoLRiC News.

**A message fro Sam Goldsmith, Chair of CoLRiC and Helen Sherwood, Editor of CoLRiC Impact**

In our line of work we are no strangers to change. We are the "in between" educational sector, which seems to suffer from changes in policy and therefore funding. Changes in institutional management can bring a rapid swing to whether the service is valued or not. Further Education must flex quickly, for example the T levels introduction has been a source of intense pressure for FE over the past two years and yet very few colleges have a full cohort of courses. Along with our institutions the library and LRC services must constantly change and adjust. It can seem like a constant draining cycle. Along with the stress this does foster skills and opportunities though. Having to rapidly take the service online gave us new digital learning skills. We have always been the "jack of all trades" section of the profession but having to change our roles makes us more flexible and offers a wider range of job opportunities. Dealing with annual budget savings has made us cleverer at what we buy, making use of groups like CoLRiC to apply buying power and tracking and promoting use of resources to get best value. We are adept at performance indicators and proving engagement because our chosen sphere can often require us to prove our worth.

If you are struggling with your current cycle of change, please do use the CoLRiC JiscMail to get in touch with other members. Even if there is not a solution, it is very therapeutic to hear you are not alone.

If you would like to contribute to a future issue of Impact, details of how to submit an article can be found on the back page.

"Libraries play a critical role in supporting organisational goals and strategies. Our resources and services have demonstrable value and impact helping create and sustain an institution-wide lifelong learning environment"

Corinne Walker - Executive Committee member

CoLRiC is the voice of Further Education and Sixth Form College libraries and learning resource services. An independent organisation, we represent librarians and learning resource professionals across the UK, influencing the development of quality assurance standards, and showcasing exemplary practice and innovation

**ADVOCACY**

CoLRiC is a leading national advocate for library and learning resource services across Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges.

**IMPACT**

CoLRiC Impact is our e-newsletter featuring case studies, local initiatives and good news stories shared by our members.

**COMMUNITY**

We provide opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge and experiences, face to face and online.

**AWARDS**

We celebrate creativity, resourcefulness and enterprise in Library and Learning Resource Services across the sector with our annual professional awards.

**SPONSORS**

We value the support of our sponsors; vendors who provide resources and technology to support teaching and learning.

CoLRiC
Council for Learning Resources in Colleges

# member benefits

- Free attendance at virtual CPD events
- Discounted attendance at face-to-face CPD and networking events
- Four issues of our e-newsletter CoLRiC Impact published over an academic year
- Access to our repository – a collection of strategic and operational documents
- Access to our private members' discussion forum
- Opportunities for heads of service and senior managers to participate in informal strategic discussions
- Support with staff recruitment and access to job vacancies
- Opportunity to participate in member surveys on current hot topics impacting FE and sixth form colleges
- Advice and guidance on evidencing service quality, value, impact and demonstrating return on investment
- Eligibility to register for our prestigious Peer Accreditation Scheme
- Eligibility to submit nominations for two prestigious, high profile national Awards
- Professional development opportunities for colleagues through participating in CoLRiC activities and projects
- Regular member email updates and bulletins, featuring CoLRiC MediaWatch

For more information, please visit:
www.colric.org.uk @Colric_Tweets

# COPING WITH COVID: A CALL FOR MEMBERS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES OF ITS IMPACT ON LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCE SERVICES

The alarming rise in Covid infections across the UK indicates that this debilitating pandemic is far from over and continues to adversely impact the education sector. The Department for Education's announcement of changes to Covid safety measures from the 1st of April has left staff struggling to deliver teaching, learning and a high quality student experience. The end to universal free symptomatic and asymptomatic rapid flow testing and constantly changing guidance on Covid etiquette – testing, mask wearing, self-isolation, even recognising extensive new symptoms - have not helped the situation.

**The School Leaders' Union (NAHT) General Secretary Paul Whiteman commented:** 'We have repeatedly warned the government that education is at breaking point. We hear sympathetic words and acknowledgement of the great work our members do but see little actual action to bring relief to the chaos. We need a proper plan for how to live with Covid long-term that is focused on keeping levels low and reducing disruption, rather than just ignoring it.'

CoLRiC's chair Sam Goldsmith has raised concerns about the implications for library and learning resource services and invites all of you to share your experiences with us.

**'With the national Covid absence rate at 1 in 10 teaching staff, student groups are often signposted to our centres at short notice when classes are postponed. Colleges are keen to ensure an element of continuity in student education and the library is a student's second home after the classroom, but this disruption can have a detrimental effect on capacity, workload and stress in our library teams.'**

On April 4th Ofsted published its Education Recovery spring 2022 update, citing evidence gathered from routine inspections. Key themes arising from the research indicate that the pandemic continues to hinder students' learning and personal development.

- Many FE students have lower levels of knowledge and skills
- Disruption has adversely affected student behaviour, social skills and attitudes
- Recruitment and retention of staff is a challenge
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing concerns remain high
- Staff Covid-related absence is a key concern
- Work experience placements remain difficult to secure

CoLRiC is keen to support you in any way we can. In the first instance we'd like to encourage you to post your experiences of these issues on the JiscMail discussion forum and email the admin team with examples of the impact of Covid - colric@colric.org.uk. We want to explore the role that library and library resource service staff can play in supporting the wider Covid agenda, and will publish your comments, opinions and experiences in a report.

To help you provide essential feedback to us, we have five key questions.

- Have you experienced any student mental health issues as they approach the first public exams in three years?
- Do you have examples of lower levels of knowledge and skills that have impacted on student induction, reading, numeracy or information literacy?
- Have you experienced a deterioration in student behaviour and attitudes that have impacted on the ability to manage library and learning resources services? Ambivalence to learning and non-attendance in the classroom has been cited as one adverse effect of the lockdown.
- How are you managing with staff recruitment and retention? Do you think that the pandemic and lockdown have encouraged some staff to reappraise their life and careers, or seek opportunities outside of the FE sector?
- Are library and learning resource services well placed to support their organisations with placement and work experience opportunities? Have you, for example, considered work placement opportunities in the library?

We look forward to your feedback.

# COLRIC NEWS

CoLRiC has some great projects lined up for 2022, including a significant expansion of our strategic and operational document repository and the ongoing development of our programme of regular online seminars. We are also developing further advocacy opportunities for heads of service and senior managers to participate in informal strategic discussions on issues impacting on the FE sector, whilst also offering CPD opportunities for all staff.

Here's a roundup of ongoing CoLRiC activities.

**CoLRiC Awards - celebrating creativity, resourcefulness and enterprise in 2022**

One key benefit of CoLRiC membership is the eligibility to submit nominations for our two prestigious national Awards: The CoLRiC Jeff Cooper Inspirational Information Professional of the Year Award and the CoLRiC Innovative Practice Award (CIPA).

The Jeff Cooper Inspirational Information Professional of the Year Award is named in honour of CoLRiC's founder and presented to an individual who has demonstrated a commitment to change lives and empower students. The CoLRiC Innovative Practice Award (CIPA) is for teams that can demonstrate creativity, resourcefulness and enterprise in Library and Learning Resource Services in any capacity.

The 2022 call for applications or nominations has now been published. Applications are reviewed by a judging panel comprising sector experts and members of CoLRiC's Executive Committee. The awards submission process will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on the value and impact of your service and its contribution to teaching, learning and the student experience, celebrating teamwork and showcasing innovative local projects.

Please don't hesitate to contact us - colric@colric.org.uk – with any questions or for further information.

**CoLRiC surveys – a 2022 review**

Since CoLRiC's inception in 1993 it has published member survey reports on a range of issues that impact on the Further Education and Sixth Form College sector. An executive summary of the 2020 survey is available in the document repository. It reflected on the impact of the Covid pandemic and subsequent first lockdown.

**'There were significant issues with data collection. The first lockdown was announced after the survey had been launched. This meant that responses included both pre-and post-lockdown data which distorted the results. Obviously, student views, requirements and feedback during the lockdown were dramatically different from feedback collected before. Regardless, some interesting broad-based themes arose from the survey. There were lots of good news stories we extracted from the survey data; a wealth of compliments students made about their library and learning resource services. They very much value learning resources and services and the support of library staff. There was also universal praise for outreach activities, collaboration with curriculum teams and college leadership, alongside our significant contribution to e-learning.'**

To ensure the relevance and quality of future surveys and support you in identifying trends and developments that will help inform operational and strategic planning, the CoLRiC Executive Committee is reviewing the structure of surveys for this year and beyond.

Chair Sam Goldsmith writes: 'Based on feedback from member institutions, most notably difficulties in acquiring data on student experiences and activities post-2020, CoLRiC has decided that this review is essential. We appreciate that previous survey findings have been helpful for benchmarking purposes, but students are changing the way that they engage with and make use of our services, so it is crucial to explore new ways of gathering more qualitative information to demonstrate the value and impact of library and learning resource services. A key suggestion is regular quick surveys on current hot topics impacting on the sector. These could embrace specific themes reflected in CoLRiC's quality and accreditation framework (PAS, and would include leadership and management, learning resources and collection development, quality assurance and teaching and learning. We can use the information from these surveys to identify areas for member support, including hosting further online seminars and publishing findings in our e-newsletter CoLRiC Impact. Please do get in touch with the Admin team - colric@colric.org.uk - if you have other ideas and approaches that would be useful to you.

**Member benefits**

You will find information on our member benefits published on pages 3-4 of this issue of Impact. Don't forget that your institutional membership enables any individual in your organisation to access our portfolio of CoLRiC publications and resources.

**Online seminars**

CoLRiC inaugural members' only free online lunchtime seminar was held in February on the theme of **Digital Accessibility: Removing Barriers to Learning** and was presented by Andy Eachus, Executive Committee member and Digital Skills Trainer at the University of Huddersfield and Sam Goldsmith, CoLRiC Chair and Library Manager at The Manchester College. The seminar introduced the challenges faced by students when accessing online learning content, covered best practice for making documents, presentations and PDFs accessible and explored built-in features, online accessibility tools and design decisions that affect accessibility.

The great news is that the seminar was so popular that we hope to announce a repeat shortly. Andy will also present on the topic of '**Free Assistive Technology for Students'** later in the year.

In April, Mishka Fielding, Library and Study Centre Manager at Loreto Sixth Form College presented on **Creating a Departmental Digital Strategy**. Digital provision underpins teaching and learning, resource delivery and discoverability, collection development, management and information literacy. A Loreto SFC departmental review in January 2021 assessed key areas of service delivery including digital resources and library systems, ICT infrastructure and proficiency, information, data and media literacies, digital identity and wellbeing, the student experience of the service and organisational leadership and management. Mishka, Chair of Jisc's FE Learning Resources and Library Services Community of Practice, reflected on Loreto's journey and provided thought-provoking insight into working with Jisc on an organisational approach to articulating a digital strategy. She discussed the methods and resources she used to create an action plan to meet student need and expectations, including her utilisation of Jisc frameworks, team auditing and sharing best practice with other colleges. She also talked about the benefits the strategy has brought for her team and department.

**Suggestions for future seminar topics please**

We want to ensure that the CoLRiC seminar programme is relevant to your needs, so please email the Admin team with your thoughts and suggestions for future topics, or perhaps you have something you'd like to present on a project or theme yourself? We look forward to hearing from you.

**Do we have all your recommended local email contacts?**

We're keen to ensure that we engage with members on a regular basis and are continually updating our contact database. Are there additional colleagues that you'd like us to add to our records? A deputy head of service, or a campus manager? Please let us know.

**Access to member only content on the CoLRiC website**

Everybody in your team will require a personal CoLRiC password to access some of the content, most notably current and previous issues of our e-newsletter CoLRiC Impact and the document repository. If you have not received an email from us inviting you to create your own password, then please email us for further advice and information. We will create an account for you and email you with further instructions.

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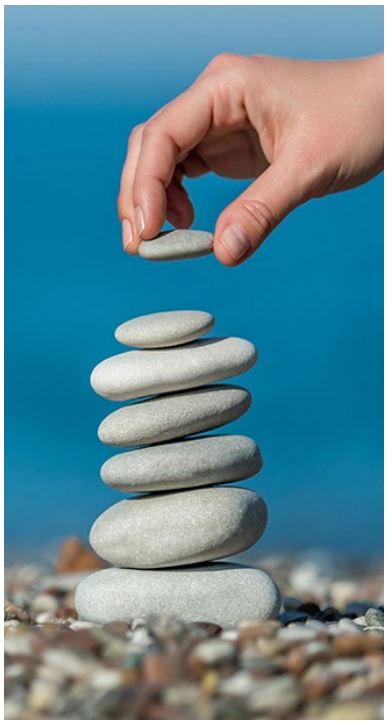
# IS OXFORD - HOW TIDY IS YOUR DATA? - Emma Duffield, Sales Manager, IS Oxford



It was the Case of the Disappearing Loans; a mystery brought to us by a confused librarian. Books on loan were magically disappearing from a borrower's account, then reappearing, then disappearing again. How could this be?

After a brief investigation, the IS Oxford Support engineer's immediate suspicions were confirmed: the borrower had two accounts on the system, each with a list of loans. Further examination proved that this was just the beginning. A mistake by IT staff in a reader import had duplicated hundreds of readers, nobody had checked the import and unfortunately nobody noticed until the borrower mentioned it at the desk. All of a sudden there was a great deal of unpicking to do.

I'm not going to name and shame anyone, but this is just one recent example of a small error having wide-reaching repercussions. Regardless of the library management system you use, untidy data isn't just an irritation. Here's a few examples of the trouble untidy data can cause:

**Discoverability**

Untidy catalogue data makes it harder to find things.

**Credibility**

Inaccurate data will undermine the reputation of your library as a trusted source of information.

**Staff time**

Data problems cause hold ups at the issue desk.

**Budget**

You may be buying items you don't need or missing a requirement for titles that you do.

**GDPR**

Not removing records of people who have left will be in breach of your college's GDPR policy.

**Accuracy**
Data about your library needs to be current e.g., the names of library staff on correspondence and the opening hours for library sites.

**Accessibility**
Reports on the titles in highest demand must be reliable so you can make the best use of shelf space.

**Stock loss**
Overdues will go astray if contact details are incorrect and your stock won't be returned in a timely fashion, if at all.

**How does data become untidy?**

Library software developers are well aware of the importance of data integrity. They build in safeguards, such as authority controls and validated fields, to aid consistency. However, despite best intentions, errors can creep in - but how?

Perhaps your data cataloguing and management policies have changed over time; perhaps they never existed in the first place? Even so, adhering to a strict data entry strategy is little use if you then import data in bulk from other sources. In our experience the biggest culprit is the dodgy reader import, where the data being imported didn't quite adhere to the mapping strategy. Importing catalogue records from a range of sources also puts your data at the mercy of the data providers' cataloguing standards. You might have done some 'quick and dirty' data entry yourself with the intention of returning and polishing it later, but never did.

System housekeeping tools can be a great benefit, but only if they are used! Checks and balances are all very well, but if you are not periodically reviewing circulation rules, calendars and library details what are you checking against?

Library staff need to know what they are doing. If your institution hasn't invested in any formal training for library managers, then best practice will not have been followed. Maybe someone was trained back in the mists of time, but over the years a succession of staff with 'Super user' access each had their own ideas of how data should be entered. They will also have had access to global change and global delete tools, which can do incredible damage if employed without the requisite testing or with a 'gung-ho' application (you know who you are). We know of colleges that have gone for a period with no librarian at all and in those cases there is always data correction work to do before normal service can resume.

Finally, lack of time is a huge factor. In our experience library staff are under more pressure than ever and regular fixtures such as the annual stocktake have had to be abandoned. Without it, however, how can you be sure that your catalogue actually reflects the reality of the stock on the shelves? If only library users wouldn't keep coming in and moving things around!

**What can IS Oxford's Data Tidy service do to help?**

At IS Oxford we have been on a mission this spring to educate our users in the importance of good quality data. Throughout April our regular weekly hints and tips emails focussed on data integrity, and the recording of a live 'Data tidy' session we undertook last year was available for all Heritage Cirqa users to view again. We hope that we've inspired our users to take a look under the bonnet of their own systems, just to check everything is running as smoothly as it should. If you use Heritage Cirqa and you're persuaded of the benefits, but you just don't know where to start looking, then booking your own 'Data Tidy' service could be an excellent investment.

Heritage Cirqa has tools to make selective and global changes and these, combined with the sophisticated and flexible reporter, mean that our experts can find areas for improvement and make changes quickly.

There is no 'one size fits all' as everyone's data is different. A 30 minute 'Just the facts' session involves one of our experts analysing your data, finding issues and suggesting ways you can make significant improvements. Our full 2 hour 'Comprehensive Health Check' service sees our expert safely undertaking global deletions of unwanted data, scheduling routine tasks to be run automatically and adjusting settings in Heritage Cirqa to remove steps in workflows that you might be undertaking manually. We will also review your processes and ensure that you are using all the time-saving features Heritage Cirqa provides.

If you are a Heritage Cirqa customer we are confident an investment of as little as £60 plus VAT for a 30-minute session will save you time and money in the long run. Find out more at Data & System Healthchecks. If you're not, then hopefully this will have at least given you some ideas for identifying and resolving issues in your own system.

For further details about Heritage Cirqa or our services please drop me a line at emma@isoxford.com.

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# CIPA: CONTRIBUTING TO THE 'DIGITAL COLLEGE' AGENDA AT BOLTON COLLEGE - Janette Davies, LRC Assistant, Bolton College

The pandemic lockdowns accelerated our contribution to the college's Digital Strategy. Initiatives that may have otherwise taken longer were addressed immediately to aid remote learning.

We were spurred into action to improve our digital resources. This was something we were working on but achieved much earlier than we might have done without lockdowns. This article is a follow up to our commended CoLRiC Innovative Practice Award submission in 2021 and highlights how we are continuing to build on and enhance the improvements of the last two years

**Accessing resources**

People now see working from home as the norm and learners need to be encouraged in this practice, which will greatly enhance their chances of success.

All the resources that we developed or organised to aid learning from home e.g., information sheets, instruction leaflets and tutorial videos remain in place.

We have new aesthetically pleasing graphics to simplify access to our online resources.

Our online Reading Ahead library of easy reader books has been kept. However, the digital version of the Reading Ahead challenge proved less successful than the paper version due to the circumstances of the learners. Most of our learners who take part are ESOL students with limited IT skills and inadequate equipment at home. Whilst the option to take part digitally is still available, we have opted to run the paper version this year, where candidates can write their reviews in a physical diary. We will monitor the progress and success of the challenge and review it at the end of the year.

Access to most of our online magazine subscriptions continues but some providers removed the free access after lockdown. We will look at purchasing digital copies in the future. Some magazines such as TES have already gone digital only.

We continue to ensure our social media posts are designed to connect with learners. It is a terrific way to inform them of the latest news, events and activities taking place in the LRC. Of course, we did this before lockdown too, but we now place more emphasis on it.

**Supporting wellbeing**

We feel it is important to continue with our Wellbeing campaigns, which coincide with national wellbeing events, as the emotional effects of the past two years will have an impact on people for many years to come. We plan to run several enrichment activities each term. We have already had 'Chicken Soup for the Soul' day, origami sessions and 'Mindful Monday' social media posts.

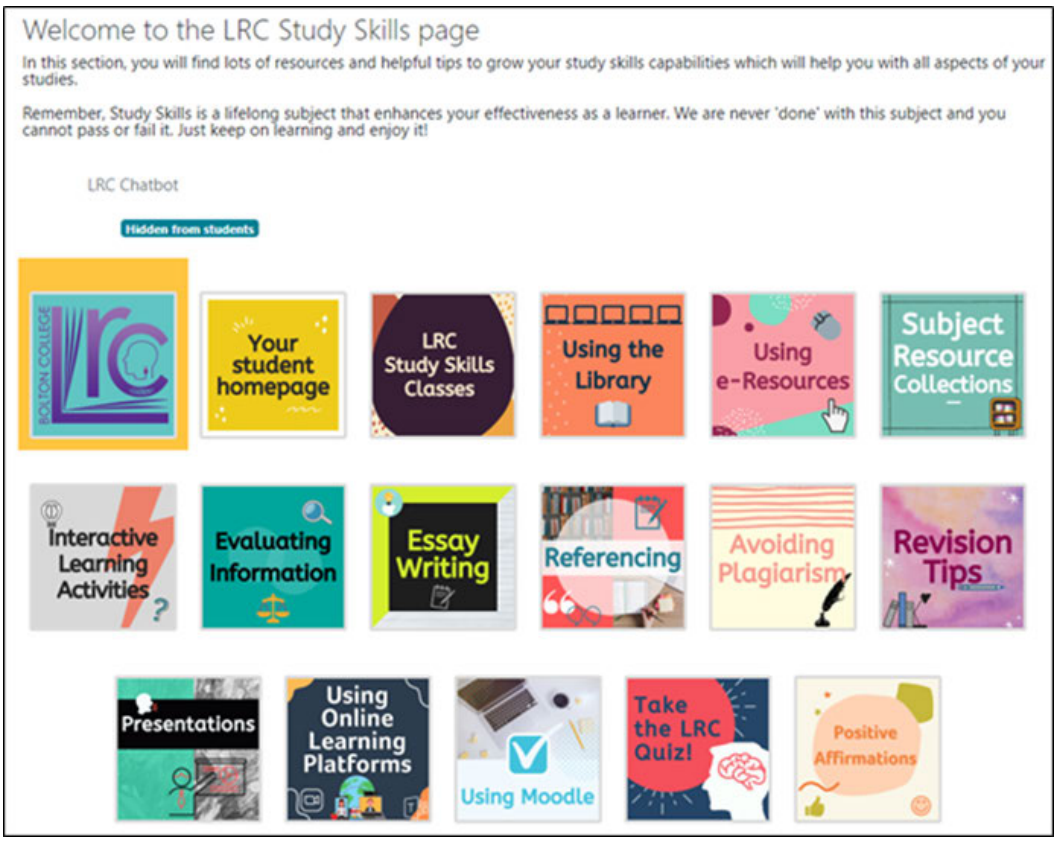
**Post lockdown hybrid solutions**

Our LRC induction has become a hybrid affair, benefitting from face-to-face contact with digital segments. We find that face-to-face contact helps to build a rapport with users, enables them to know where we are and to feel comfortable in our environment. Online elements ensure everyone receives the same information and allow learners to revisit sections if necessary. Tutors have stated that the blended inductions work well for them and their students. Student feedback has been positive. Comments on face-to-face inductions have included 'It was helpful and delivered in a good way to make it easy to understand'.

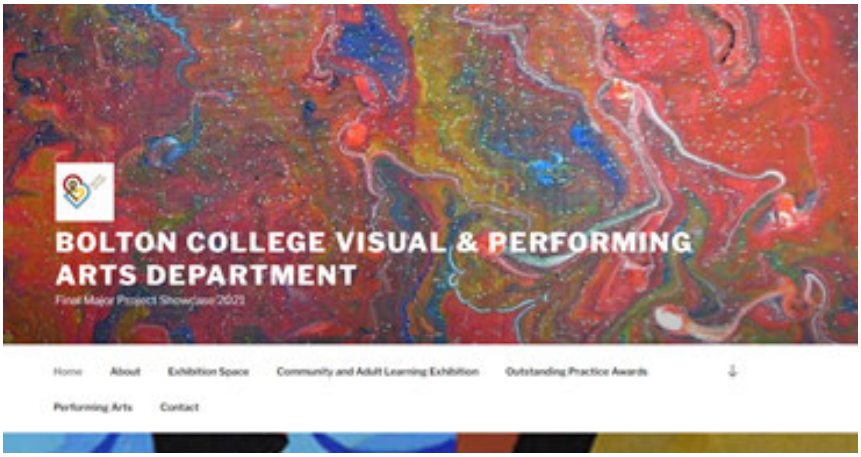
During the lockdown we felt it appropriate to update the library "Reservations" facility to become "Click and Collect" to indicate that learners could 'collect' their books. Since this phrase is familiar to most people, we decided to keep it. The facility is the same as the 'Reservations' one, but with a 'facelift'.

Some Covid safety measures are still in place. We have kept the screens in front of our service desks and sanitising stations throughout the centres.

Learners continue to benefit from our updated Study Skills page and additional online e-learning resources.



Our Personal Development Zone, created to support staff and students' personal development whilst working remotely has remained as the go-to place when you have lost your spark. It is a virtual space for accessing a plethora of interesting informative apps and websites.




Live exhibitions are planned for this year, but our online Art Gallery has also remained in order to reach a wider audience. This was created as a direct response to teachers struggling to showcase their students' work. It is an online area to exhibit artwork created by our learners. The platform has the potential to develop learners' digital skills, enable learners to showcase their work and promote our art courses to new students.

Our online resources created for ESOL learners who were struggling with online lessons are still available. They were created to help them use Teams and Zoom and therefore are still relevant.

We are definitely seeing a hybrid approach across many areas of our work. We have taken what works digitally whilst acknowledging the benefits brought by face-to-face contact.

BOLTON COLLEGE

Highly commended

# SPOTLIGHT ON……

## Amelia Cuffy-Nash, Emily Duckett and Laura Pickard, Library Officers at The Manchester College

Amelia, Emily, and Laura are new to working in libraries. The applicant selection process focused on experience in customer care, training, education support and working with young people, rather than specific library experience or qualifications.

**How did you become a Library Officer?**

**AC** - I applied for the role for multiple reasons. Firstly I was a student at this college doing my foundation degree in Fashion Design. The library staff made a massive impression on my development and were always supportive, going above and beyond to help us with anything. I have always enjoyed learning and continue to develop and build skills to better myself, which has led me to further my interest in the education system.

**LP** - I was working as a primary school teacher but took the decision to have a change of career due to the workload pressures involved in teaching. I had been employed on a temporary basis by the college in an administrative role, but I was keen to secure a position that would enable me to be supporting learners in some way. A position became available within the HE library for a Library Officer and I felt this was a perfect opportunity. The role has given me the opportunity to use my teaching skills through the delivery of a variety of study skills sessions along with providing support for students in a variety of ways.

**ED** - I've always been interested in libraries, and I have an English degree, but I worked in the hospitality industry for two years before joining the library team at the Manchester College. Funnily enough, even though working in a pub and helping students in a library might seem vastly different, I actually think they have a lot of similarities. At the core of things, I've always found that what I enjoy most about a job is interacting with people and making sure they come away having had a positive experience. I suppose combining my love of books and learning with my love for helping people is what led me here!

**What has been the biggest surprise about your new role?**

**AC** - Probably how nice and supportive the staff are, even though it was slightly expected. Everyone has been so accommodating. I've been made to feel at ease and welcomed, everyone is very real and kind which it so great and super refreshing. On another note, I have been surprised by the behaviour of some students.

**LP** - Having no library experience or training I was concerned I would find the librarianship aspects of the role challenging. However, I have quickly discovered that librarianship is quite a small part of the role, and I was quickly able to gain the necessary skills and adapt to the new IT systems to enable me to manage the library with confidence.

**ED** - I think when you imagine a library, you imagine a room filled with books, but technology is so important now. I've learnt so much about how the online databases and e-books we have can enhance a student's learning experience, and have just generally found it so interesting to see how the old fashioned view of a library has been modernised and improved to make sure that today's learners get as much as they can out of how amazing today's technology can be.

**What has been the biggest challenge you have faced?**

**AC** - In my brief time so far, I have seen student behavioural issues and think this may be an area for me to develop my own skills. So far they have listened to an extent, and I know I have the support of the team.

**LP** - The biggest challenge I have faced has been getting the students and staff to engage with the study skills sessions. Despite promoting sessions on a variety of platforms and offering a variety of days and times, I have found that unless tutors are booking sessions and physically bringing the students, they are not willing to take part.

**ED** - I work at a college campus which has dealt with a lot of behavioural issues, and I found this quite overwhelming when I first started. Students were coming to the library purely as a social space, meaning it was almost impossible for students who were there to study to get any work done. However, we have recently implemented a sign-in system, so students must commit to coming to the library to study and use the library facilities and it's been incredibly effective! It's improved our working environment vastly and it's made it so much easier for us to help students, and for those students in turn to learn in a library with a more peaceful and nurturing atmosphere.

**Do you have an area of the role you are particularly interested in developing further?**

**AC** - I'm interested in working with the student experience team more to showcase displays and create more engagement with students for the library. I also want to develop my demonstration skills for academic skills sessions and to get involved in our social media marketing.

**LP** - There are some librarianship aspects that I feel I need to develop, in particular the acquisition of library resources. I realise to be able to do this effectively I will need to develop my subject knowledge of the courses provided by the college.

**ED** - I'm keen on helping to further develop study skills sessions for students, in particular in our HE library, and making sure the students feel as supported as possible throughout their courses. Making sure each campus within our college is offering up to date and accurate information to students, and making sure students know that they can keep coming back as much as they want until they fully understand something is important to me. Just making sure students are aware of the services that libraries can offer them is vital, and I've also been working to help improve the library website to better advertise those services.

**Describe yourself in three words...**

**AC** - Optimistic, creative, inquisitive

**LP** - Approachable, enthusiastic, happy

**ED** - Calm, honest, loyal.

# RECRUITING SUCCESSFULLY DURING A PANDEMIC - Helen Sherwood, Senior Librarian, Wakefield College (part of the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group) and Editor, CoLRiC Impact

The pandemic changed a lot of things for a lot of people. Priorities changed and more time was given to making decisive changes. This was very apparent in the workplace and Wakefield College was no exception. By the summer of 2021 we were three team members down, with another coming up to retirement. We needed to recruit two Librarians and a Library Assistant. Recruitment took place in the summer and autumn of 2021 and early in the new year in 2022. We were recruiting at three different stages of the pandemic and different approaches and attitudes were evident. But more importantly; did we successfully appoint? The short answer is YES!

**The recruitment process**

One interview was via Teams with the three members of the interview panel in separate rooms on the Wakefield City campus. One was in an interview room but with mask wearing, hand sanitiser and wipes a very visible part of the pre- and post-interview routine. The third was closest to normal, although still with some mask wearing in public areas.

The college has robust procedures in place for recruiters and an application process which gives candidates the best opportunity to map their skills and attitude to what we are looking for. We were still concerned about carrying out our first virtual interviews. Candidates were sent guidance by our Human Resources team about how best to manage their environment and tips for using the Teams interface. There is an argument that candidates are potentially more relaxed in their own environment. They could also demonstrate their ability to operate in an online environment.

Research on the effectiveness of virtual interviews is starting to appear in journals as institutions and companies review the success (or not of recruitment practices over the last two years. Kruse (2021 feels that "patience and empathy are key to a successful remote interview".

**A Teams interview**

It is certainly harder in a video interview for both the candidates and panel to get a feel for people they are meeting for the first time. Our question sets were designed to gauge both the skills and personality of candidates. Our successful candidate was invited on site before giving her firm acceptance. Fortunately, she liked us and nearly a year on Laura Walker was able to reflect on the experience.

**'My interview took place on Teams in June 2021. I dressed as I would have done for an in-person interview and kept notes at the side of my laptop to prompt myself. I found I quite liked interviewing virtually (or as much as you can enjoy being interviewed because everyone recognised the uniqueness of the situation, which gave it a friendlier feeling that put us all on an even keel. Everyone was doing something slightly out of the ordinary; I mentioned that I was dog sitting so was worried that the dog might start barking and interrupt! I am normally a very anxious interviewee, so this helped me to relax and give a better performance. When I was offered the job, I was also invited to look around to make sure I wanted to accept. This made me feel welcomed and valued before I had even set foot in the building, and I had no hesitation in accepting the position.'**

Because we appointed three times in six months it was a great development experience for our first appointee. She went quickly (via the appropriate training) from interviewee to interviewer.

**A socially distanced interview**

Our second set of interviews was a 'masks on' event. Eye contact is even more important. More consideration was given to room size and ventilation. Considering how stressful interviews can be this is probably something that should be kept in the planning process. I have interviewed in small windowless rooms that would no longer be considered appropriate in terms of size and ventilation. Bradley Barnes was appointed and had a particular reason for appreciating the way that the college was managing safe working practices.

**'Upon reporting to reception to await my interview, I was reassured to see that strict social distancing protocols were being followed, with protective screens for staff, ample hand sanitation stations and mask wearing in abundance. As somebody who fits into the "vulnerable" category regarding Covid-19, to see these practices being carried out in such a consistent manner removed any apprehensions I had in interacting with potentially hundreds of staff and students per day. Moreover, the interview process was conducted just like any other pre-pandemic interview, apart from sitting around two metres away from the interviewing panel. None of these measures hindered my overall performance and I was grateful for the opportunity to interview in person, rather than through a webcam or telephone call. I left the interview impressed with how the college was navigating the challenges of the pandemic and felt more comfortable with the prospect of working there as a result.'**

**A 'nearly back to normal' interview**

By January 2022 restrictions were starting to ease further. Cat Mulholland was appointed, and she reflects on how some of the mandatory Covid-19 workplace adjustments are sensible habits to adopt going forward.

**"I started in my Librarian role at the end of lockdown (March 2022), just as government guidance was ending, which meant I was interviewed in person and didn't have to work online when I started. The behaviours we picked up during lockdown continued such as spacing out in meeting rooms and wearing masks when we were out in public areas. Luckily, the area we work in allows for lots of room between co-workers and the front desk has plastic barriers to protect our staff. My time here has been the closest to 'back to normal' that I've experienced in two years. I hope our new habits will help reduce the spread of Covid-19 and reduce seasonal illnesses like cold and flu".**

Our final successful candidate literally started with us as we became part of the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group, having merged with Selby College. Staff across the group are now reviewing processes and workflows. Successfully recruiting during challenging times has been such a positive boost and we are looking to carry this forward into the days and months ahead.

**Reference**

Kruse, C (2021) Finding the best talent using remote interviews: social distancing and other pandemic precautions don't have to slow down your search for talent. Journal of Accountancy. 1 July. Available at https://www.journalofaccountancy.com/issues/2021/jul/effective-remote-job-interviews.html [Accessed 07/04/2022]

# THE BACK PAGE

CoLRiC encourages the submission of articles by all members for publication in CoLRiC Impact. To discuss ideas for articles in advance please send an e-mail with a short outline of proposed content.

If you submit an article about the service at your college, please include a summary of key service information that will provide the reader with some context and help them to compare with their own college e.g., staffing numbers/types/opening hours.

Four issues of Impact are scheduled for the 2021-2022 academic year. The theme for the remaining issue is shown below. If you would like to submit an article, please note the advice below and the closing dates for submissions.

**August 2022 –** End of year reflections – deadline 8th July 2022.

To submit an article please email the following to colric@colric.org.uk: (a) an unformatted Word document; (b) any associated files or good quality images, if prompted send images as 'Actual size', head shots should be sent against a clear background; (c) any recommended further reading; and (d) any links to any external content to be embedded into the final e-newsletter. There is a word count limit of 1,200 on articles. Word count limits for other regular features will be confirmed with members ahead of submission. The CoLRiC Impact editorial team will be responsible for formatting, editing, and proof-reading all contributions before publication. Please include the email addresses and job titles of all contributing authors. All authors will retain their copyright.

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