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THE IMAGE MAKEOVER OF LEARNING RESOURCES AT CHESTER COLLEGE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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In looking to work more effectively at Chester, we realised that the subject teams were separately producing user education materials when this work might more productively be co-ordinated. Our web pages were also giving concern as we had not reviewed their structure recently and found that they were not as user-friendly and easy to navigate as other sites. What began as a simple decision to work together on these guides led to a plan to completely change the way in which Learning Resources presents itself and its services to its users.

As with all good management projects, we defined our aims and set up working parties, comprising a cross-section of library staff, - one to look at the web pages and the other to overhaul printed leaflets. Both working parties agreed at the outset that they would work to standardise the design and look of all guides in terms of logos, style and language. As the project progressed this did in fact happen with web pages mirroring the style and format used in all printed literature.

The web pages party took an overview of existing and desired information. They then set about improving navigation by re-organising the pages, adding several new pages, such as a news page and a FAQs section, and updated all content. There was much animated discussion whether to adhere to official college-web publishing policy or to branch out and go it alone. There is a college web-publishing policy, but some departments have developed their own formats and house style. We decided to stick with college policy as politically and practically the right thing to do, especially as the information would download to off-campus machines more quickly. The downside of this decision meant that our creativity was limited as the official web publishing policy does impose design constraints.

The user education party started with the task of thoroughly overhauling all Learning Resources guides. The guides had not revised for some time and displayed a variety of formats, shapes and sizes. The working party produced a publication guide and template for future consistency in the presentation, style and format of all literature. As part of the revamp a new Learning Resources logo was designed to give Learning Resources a unified but distinctive identity within the college. The new logo appears on all literature and also forms the basis of Learning Resources staff identity badges.

This overhauling of the web pages and guides meant that Learning Resources could now focus on promoting its new image to users and we decided on a PR drive during Freshers Week. We took the bold step of securing a stall at the 'Freshers finance and administration day', and set out to promote Learning Resources as a student-friendly service. Wearing tee shirts in the college colour of burgundy and emblazoned with the slogan 'informationsorted@LearningResources' our staff tirelessly worked the long queues of students waiting to register. We distributed free pens and post-it pads sporting the slogan and library contact information, and also invited students to sign up for library tours. The day went well (we had a captive audience!) and we feel we were successful in promoting a very positive image of the library. The burgundy tee-shirts were a resounding success; students could easily identify staff when they needed help and the staff were more than happy to enter into the spirit of the day by presenting a pro-active, friendly image. All this effort, together with photographs, was featured in the local weekly paper the *Chester Chronicle*.

Overall, Learning Resources feels that, for a first attempt, the image makeover was generally successful. Learning Resources now has its own distinct identity within the college and we were

able to use this promote ourselves and our services to students. However, the exercise was not without its problems. Closer co-operation with the print unit would have prevented it from being overloaded with printing library guides at what is the busiest time of the year for them. Signing students up for library tours when they had not yet received timetables was not a good idea as there was a high drop-out rate. That said, we did e-mail those students who had signed up prior to sessions to remind them and this in itself made the point that we do communicate and we do follow things up.

Looking ahead, the amalgamation of Chester College and the higher education campus of Warrington Collegiate Institute has led to the production of a new college logo and changes will have to be made to our printed and electronic literature. Co-ordinating a promotional campaign across two sites will no doubt be complicated but we are already preparing for and looking forward to the challenge!



Fiona McLean and Helen Thomas wear their tee-shirts and promote Learning Resources to new students.