Hull College has increased library usage through the promotion of e-resources. The college is now able to cater to an increased number of learners and also tailor services to different types of learner, such as distance or part-time students, or learners with disabilities. E-Resources have made the library service more responsive to the needs of both learners and staff within college.

About Hull College

Hull College teaches over 25,500 learners on more than 1,000 courses from Foundation Level to BA Hons Degrees and via work-based learning and community programmes. There are five libraries in Hull College Group.

The challenge

The challenge for Emily Armstrong, Libraries Manager, and Chris Skerrow, e-Resources Librarian, was to increase use of e-resources and the responsiveness of libraries within Hull College Group.

The activity

There are many approaches to promoting e-resources within the college:

A variety of e-resources are provided

Hull College introduced e-books in 2008 and has built a collection of over 750 e-book titles. Each title costs between £5 and £100, which includes 200-400 credits. Students viewing an e-book use one credit for 24 hours
use. In addition to e-books, Hull College also has 30 paid e-resource subscriptions, plus free ones, on various subjects, such as Infotrac, JSTOR, NewsUK, Rock's Backpages, and Intute.

**Ease of access to e-resources**
There are a variety of routes to e-resources. The college uses Moodle, its virtual learning environment (VLE), to promote and navigate between resources. e-Resources are highlighted on the homepage, on a dedicated page and also on subject-specific pages. The VLE is also linked with the library catalogue and has an embedded library search. Furthermore, students can access e-books direct from the specific e-books website.

**Student-targeted training and support**
The learning resources centre (LRC) provides three sessions for students: general LRC induction, research skills and an e-resources-specific course. The sessions are carried out on the VLE so that students can navigate to the resources after class. Help sheets are also provided. There is a single email address for the library so that students know where to go for help. There is also opportunity to provide feedback to the library via a ‘Rate this’ facility on the VLE for various e-resources.

**Staff training and dialogue**
The LRC provides support for staff development. Library staff have created packages of learning resources on certain topics for staff that include weblinks, e-books and activities. They create context, not just a series of links, and suggest ways of using e-resources with learners. This includes training days on ‘How to use e-resources with your Moodle page’.

**College-wide promotion**
Emily and Chris contribute to ‘Portal Press’, the college newsletter. This keeps e-resources fresh in the minds of staff and often prompts enquiries.
The outcomes

Hull College LRC has exceeded targets of use of e-books. Instead of one in 30 students using e-books per month, the actual figure is one in 17. E-books have been used every day of the year, except Boxing Day and when the library has been closed. The statistics demonstrate that e-resources are providing an additional method for using the LRC, and not replacing the traditional walk-in use.

Emily explains: "For particular courses, the fact that you can get to the resources from outside the college is a huge factor. We have a lot of courses where they're doing part-time Foundation Degrees and they're only in once a week and we know are using these online resources heavily from home or workplace. Over half of people using these resources aren't in college at the time. That is the big selling point. These are people who wouldn't be using the library. It's additional usage. It's not just doing things a different way. It's about reaching people who aren't physically in the area."

Chris agrees that e-resources are providing additional services to students, not replacing existing services: "It's an extra option for students if we're closed or we can never have one copy of a textbook for every student. There are all kinds of reasons for tutors to give e-books a plug."

This is reflected in the types of subjects most popular amongst e-books users. "Partly, it reflects the number of e-books available, but also matches levels of interest. Business and Management students are naturally e-book users. They have access to computers at home or work. They're busy people. This appeals to them, being able to access textbooks at any time," Chris says.

Statistics show that learners are using the e-books mainly to find specific items of information. The average duration of use is two minutes, though this can range from one minute to three hours. Emily and Chris find that this reflects how students use books offline.

The impact

Catering for more learners and different types of learner
Statistics demonstrate that usage of the library has increased through the deployment of e-resources. Learners are accessing e-books at times when the library is closed. Part-time and distance learners are taking advantage of the availability. E-books are also available to all learners when print copies of a resource may not be.

E-resources provide inclusive resources for all learners
Text in e-books can be made larger or provided in audio form. One tutor of a partially-sighted learner was previously increasing text size by enlarging books through a photocopier. Now, the learners control their own learning by using the e-book facility. There is no stigma attached, as e-books can work for any learner that responds better to audio information.
Swift response to learner and tutor requests for resources

E-resources have improved library ‘customer service’. It is now easier for both learners and staff to see available resources and request additional materials. Emily highlights: “The introduction of e-books created a spike in usage. There are over 750 titles and they're on reading lists. Students can see what we haven’t bought so we’re able to buy student requests and it only takes 48 hours to get access to an e-book, whereas getting a printed copy takes a lot longer.”

Dialogue between tutors, learners and the library

The ‘Rate this’ facility on the VLE and the ‘Request rental’ facility on Dawsonera allow students to give feedback or request new resources easily.

The promotion of e-resources also keeps library support fresh in the minds of staff

Chris says an item in the College newsletter prompts enquiries on different resources 'because they have remembered there are e-resources available'.

Emily agrees how “staff development is key. We can show the students but unless the staff have an expectation that they’re doing this sort of thing, then it’s going to be of limited amount of interest.”

Hull College was shortlisted for a Beacon Award in 2009 for this initiative in providing off-site access to resource

Useful links

- Hull College
- Hull College virtual learning environment
- Dawson Era e-books
- Jisc e-Books for FE Project

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