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Angela Leavens
Head of learning resources and e-learning, Strode College

Strode College’s Jisc subscription for 2018/19 would be £5926. Digital resources and associated services make up £538 of this - an independent study found that, without Jisc, Strode would need to pay over £120,000 for equivalent services.
The librarian’s story

I’m Angela Leavens, head of learning resources and e-learning at Strode College. We’re an FE college in rural Somerset with around 1,500 full-time 16-18 year olds plus HE students and adult learners.

I love e-books! Our learners can’t lose them! It does break our hearts as librarians thinking, I bought this book last year, I’ve got to buy it again – because things do happen, the dog does eat it or it gets left behind when they move house or lost under a bed for a couple of years. E-books are so much easier from our point of view than a hard copy. We get the title quickly, everyone can use it at the same time, and we have one e-book that will service the entire student body; you can’t say that of a paper book.

The way that we get e-books for FE for free through Jisc is absolutely fantastic as I wouldn’t be able to afford to buy that number of e-books if I was buying them from scratch. Because we’re quite small we wouldn’t be able to offer the same educational experience for students if we didn’t have a package like e-books for FE. It levels the playing field for us. That’s what e-books for FE – and Jisc in general – gives us.

The students don’t know they are using Jisc resources – they are just there for them. It’s a seamless service too because we use Shibboleth so our learners authenticate with their college username and password - we don’t have to give them a whole raft of passwords they need to remember. Our students can access the resources they need from home or on the move. And that’s really important to us as we are quite rural, we can have students commuting on buses for up to two hours to and from the campus. Being able to make their access to our resources as simple as possible really helps.

Jisc saves me a great deal of time, a great deal of money. Without Jisc I would spend a lot more time negotiating our digital resources, I’d probably need more staff and I wouldn’t be able to offer the same breadth of products for our learners. Jisc has the power to go to publishers and say we’ve got 300 colleges behind us, this is what we want for them – and the expertise to negotiate those contracts. I always get excited when something new comes out – ooooh, what have they got now, what can I have? We can afford that!