

The Library Discovery Challenge

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In February 2012, the Royal College of Nursing Library, Archives and Information Services launched a project to encourage their staff to use their resources. The inspiration for the project was twofold. Firstly, to celebrate National Libraries Day on 4th February and use this as a launch pad to promote the College's services to staff; also, as a result of CHILL (the Consortium of Independent Health Information Libraries in London) wanting to promote the Reading Agency's 'Six Book Challenge' in their libraries this year.

As Knight (2012) stated, The Reading Agency launched the Six Book Challenge in 2008. The scheme invites less confident readers to read six books and record their reading in a diary in order to receive incentives, a certificate and the chance to enter

a national prize draw. Participating organisations such as colleges, prisons and workplaces also have the chance to enter prize draws to win a visit by a top author. Ninety workplaces were involved in 2011 including over 20 NHS Trusts (The Reading Agency, 2012)

However, the RCN has specialist healthcare libraries that do not stock fiction. This project aimed to show how the existing stock and services is of benefit to the personal and professional development of staff (many of whom are not from a nursing background.) The RCN also has fourteen offices around the UK but only four libraries. Another aim was to ensure that staff working at all offices, and homeworkers, could all participate in the scheme. This was also an opportunity to promote the RCN's e-library and virtual services.

Between Friday 3rd February – Friday 2nd March 2012 RCN staff were encouraged to use the library and information services six times to achieve a certificate and entry into a prize draw to win a £50.00 gift card, courtesy of RCN Xtra, a website providing discounted offers to RCN members. The services which could be accessed for the scheme were:

- Borrowing books (including postal loans)
- Accessing e-books
- Accessing healthcare databases through the website
- Using the computers in the libraries
- Looking up information on Croner-i Human Resources (an online service providing HR legislation and information)

- Using the virtual enquiry service
- Requesting a tour of a library
- Looking up information on the Ashridge Virtual Learning Resource Centre ([web based](#) learning to aid personal development)
- Reading an article in an e-journal / journal in a library
- Accessing one of the 'useful websites' available through the intranet
- Requesting a literature search

Those who used the physical libraries could sign up to the Challenge in their library and receive a [joiners](#) card. The Information Assistant at Reception entered their details onto a spreadsheet so they could use our services virtually as well. Each time they came into their library and used one of the services their card was stamped. The list of services was emailed to those participating in the challenge so they could easily access materials virtually.

Those using the services from home or in the College's regional offices emailed the library service delivery team who entered their details on the spreadsheet and then emailed them the list of services. Each time anyone taking part in the Challenge used one of the eligible services they simply emailed the Library Service Delivery [Team](#) and the spreadsheet was updated.

The Library Discovery Challenge was advertised on the Intranet and a promotional email was sent to the three staff support groups (Disabled/ Race and Culture/ LBGT) as well as to the

RCN's Learning and Development Network, Health and Wellbeing Advocates, Dignity Advocates, GMB Union advocates and regional links. The scheme was also publicised to attendees from around the country at the Corporate Induction in January and while on outreach to regional offices. Posters and fliers were distributed to all the [libraries](#) and they were encouraged to display books of general interest/ non-healthcare topics which would appeal to staff.

The Library Discovery Challenge 2012 was the first time that the RCN Library, [Archives](#) and Information Services had run a project targeting all the staff of the RCN. It was heartening to see how other departments, especially Organisational Development and the Intranet team, supported and publicised the Challenge.

By the end of the month, 59 members of staff had joined up to the Challenge, representing approximately 7% of all RCN staff around the country:

- 23 in Cardiff: Ty [Maeth](#)
- 16 in Belfast
- 10 in RCN Headquarters
- 2 in Edinburgh
- 1 each from Leeds, Nottingham, London, Cardiff Gate, Bolton, Croydon, Sunderland & Birmingham.

Of the 59, 23 members of staff (39%) completed the Challenge and 85% accessed at least one of the services for the scheme.

Looking at the statistics was interesting as the importance of library staff supporting the scheme became clear. Most of the participants came from offices with libraries in the building and personal competitiveness among staff was the main factor in increasing our number of completers. This was especially true for the support of Ty Maeth and Belfast libraries staff. At these branches, staff had raced to complete the Challenge and one had even framed their certificate!

The most popular services accessed as part of the Library Discovery Challenge were as follows: borrowing books (26 times), printing / computer use in libraries (23), reading magazines / newspapers in libraries (18), enquiries asked of Library staff (15), Library tours (14), use of Ashridge VLRC (12), use of e-books (12), use of Croner-I Human Resources (9) and reading of journals in libraries (9).

Linked to the high percentage of participants from branches with libraries, more staff borrowed books than initially expected - possibly due to the wider interest displays that were presented in each library. The Challenge demonstrated a need to publicise e-resources to staff - especially those working in the regional offices and homeworkers. Luckily plans were already in place to promote new e-library resources which were about to become available.

The Challenge was well received by staff. A library manager commented, "I felt this was mostly very well received here, and I enjoyed taking part. We had well over 50% of our staff signed

up, and for some it became quite a competition. I was interested to see what a wide range of uses staff made of us. Staff also came from a wide range of departments, including Professional Practice, Communications, Employment Relations, Facilities, Directorate Office and Marketing. Only one person wasn't interested in taking part, even though he uses us several times a day!" Quotes from participants included, "It made me realise that an hour or so of doing something like this can be time really spent, perhaps accompanied by a webinar and backed up by virtual library or other means of accessing help." And "It has been a good discipline to do this and most of my use was directly related to something I needed to do or find out for a piece of work."

In conclusion, the Library Discovery Challenge was a successful way of encouraging RCN staff to use the resources of their library, archives and information service. It is hoped that it will be repeated next year, and the number of participants (and completers) will grow as RCN staff understand the scheme and how it can help their professional and personal development. Analysing the resulting statistics will be an effective way of showing areas that need promotion as well as being able to measure our impact on staff.

Bibliography

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