



DOCUMENT TITLE: Library Services Strategic Plan (2021/22 – 2025/26)

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Introduction

The last Library Strategic Plan covered the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. The absence of an updated and approved library plan since then has been noted in various university meetings throughout 2020/21 - when discussing options for the future of the Bannerman building for example. The time is now right therefore for a new 5-year Plan to be formulated given that: 1) a permanent Head of Library Services is in place 2) the dust has settled after the move of Library Services (including Records and Archives) from Information Services to the new Student & Academic Services directorate in July 2020 and 3) Library Services' formal representation in University committees has been improved. Finally, this Plan represents an ideal opportunity to build on the successful delivery of new Library services during the COVID pandemic period.

Scope and assumptions

This Plan assumes no further changes in Library Services structure and governance during the period in question and at least a flat operational budget with the ability to bid for additional funds (especially capital funding) during the annual planning process. *However, benchmarking with Brunel's university peer group does indicate that core Library funding is significantly below (-£134) the group's average spend on an expenditure/FTE student basis with an NSS 2021 score 11 points below the group average.*¹

The Plan does not seek to incorporate new activities from other sections of the University into the Library Services' portfolio but does anticipate the need to co-deliver a new "one stop shop" student support service both virtually and in Bannerman with Student Services colleagues during the life of the plan.

Brunel 2030

The objectives set out in this Plan will help deliver the following focus areas of Brunel 2030:

- Education and student experience
- Research
- Campus and local community
- University community

Bannerman Library

Focusing on improving Bannerman Library is one of the most important aspects of this Plan as it cuts across most of the objectives. Recent Estates survey work on conditions of campus infrastructure has confirmed that the Bannerman building is structurally sound. However, major refurbishment works are still required on the internal fabric to upgrade heating, ventilation and electrical services. In addition, the internal Library décor and fittings are tired and worn with inefficient use of space throughout the four floors due to short-term operational changes made over the course of the last decade. There has not been a holistic reappraisal of the building as a whole in light of Brunel's evolving teaching and learning needs, rendering the Library out of date from a student experience perspective compared to peer group university libraries in the UK.

Medium to Longer Term Objectives

Discussions with the Executive Director of Campus Services on his vision for the 4 main student-facing spaces at the heart of campus (Bannerman, Lecture Centre, Hamilton & Crank site) offer a

¹ Average expenditure/FTE student 2019/20 = £414 versus Brunel's £280 [Source: SCONUL]. NSS % Library Score average: 76.81 v. 65.93.

way forwards for the next 5 years if the necessary stage-gate funding is approved:

1. Conduct a 12-month survey and planning exercise for the whole of Bannerman during 2021/22 FY. This would incorporate flexible teaching space elements into the Bannerman Annex along with a one-stop shop student service area on the ground floor and a re-planned Library with consolidated collection spaces and a new variety of student social/study spaces in line with best sector practice. A high standard, climate-controlled facility for Brunel's records, archives and special collections would also need to be included.
2. Work with Estates to bid for a 12-18-month Bannerman capital project to start by Autumn 2023/24 with sufficient funding included for an appropriate temporary Library decant option e.g. using a temporary facility on the Crank site. The New Bannerman building would therefore open by January 2025.

Short Term Objectives

It is apparent that, even in light of the above, careful and appropriate short-term investment is needed to maintain the current Bannerman Library space during the next 3 years and to enhance the student experience wherever possible until the new building project is completed. Examples of this include:

1. Expanding 3 teaching rooms in Summer 2021 to cater for larger class sizes to facilitate team-based learning (TBL) and social distancing (if still required).
2. Procuring new "off the shelf" study pod type furniture in FY2021/22 to support small group study and video conferencing in recognition of the new post-COVID emphasis on hybrid teaching and learning.
3. Working with Estates and other Bannerman tenants to redevelop the former Incomes Office space in the Bannerman foyer to offer additional student social space and a flexible event space able to be used by other University services such as the Professional Development Centre.
4. Working with Media Services to refresh and upgrade existing AV equipment in the various Bannerman study spaces and high-demand group study rooms.
5. Working with the Colleges, reviewing and withdrawing unused stock to consolidate collections space (thereby enabling the building works above) and making interim improvements to the book sequence flow in light of negative student feedback.
6. Retaining a dedicated postgraduate study room on the first floor of the Library and repurposing the adjoining Learning Commons area accordingly to reduce noise.
7. Continuing to offer term-time 24/7 Library access during the life of this Plan.
8. Making greater use of the light and airy ground floor turnstile area for temporary events and exhibitions.

Student, Teaching and Enquiry Support

1. Working with Student Services colleagues in SAS and the Student Union, we would like to establish a "One-Stop shop" service area for student support services on Bannerman Ground floor by 2023/24 to reduce the need for students to present to multiple enquiry points around the Campus. This would include provision of assorted private consultation rooms for confidential/counselling discussions, meeting booths and rooms plus flexible "market stall" space provision for temporary promotional and outreach events etc that can be booked by other University departments as needed.

2. In the meantime, we will enhance our Customer Service provision to offer a consistent virtual and face-to-face 7 day a week helpdesk operation from Autumn 2021 with the recruitment of our new dedicated weekend Customer Service team.
3. We will launch a mobile app version of our library catalogue system during 2021/22 as an interim improvement to our resource discovery services for students before we invest in a new library management system (LMS) during this life of this plan. A new LMS will simplify the Library's systems infrastructure and associated processes for our students and staff as well as ensuring better accuracy and quicker accessioning/availability of new resources.
4. Together with our colleagues in Student Services, we will submit a joint application for Customer Service Excellence accreditation² at an appropriate point during the life of this Plan (e.g. in sync with the creation of the "One-Stop shop" service model mentioned above) to demonstrate that we are committed to the highest levels of service delivery in line with our competitors.
5. A new Reading List Policy and associated oversight process via College Education Committees will be in place during 2021/22 – this will ensure consistency of reading list terminology and material availability across courses and also endeavour to ensure that lists are kept up-to-date.
6. The Academic Services team within the Library will build further on their new services developed during the COVID pandemic including the development of additional self-guided online tutorials to complement the two existing ones on referencing and plagiarism, e.g. on systematic literature reviews.
7. Flexible drop-ins in person and online will be offered along with recorded and pre-recorded Library training sessions as part of the ongoing LibSmart Programme. Podcasts will also be piloted for staff development in particular.
8. Library Services will also contribute to the delivery of the new VLE during 2021/22 to help ensure effective integration of information resources and digital literacy materials.
9. We will undertake a review of our various websites and online communication channels with Marketing & Communications and student testers to ensure we are communicating effectively without duplication of effort.
10. Finally, to help deliver these objectives, we will work with the Student Union to deliver a "Your library campaign" to help foster engagement, ownership and buy-in amongst the different student cohorts, endeavouring to tailor offerings where we are able to in order to meet specific needs, e.g. commuter students, postgraduate students, disabled students etc.

Research Support

1. Library Services will be a key player in the Current Research Information System (CRIS) project which is intended to upgrade or replace our current system infrastructure within the next 2 years before the start of the next REF cycle. The CRIS infrastructure currently comprises BRAD (researcher profiles) and BURA (repository) as core components interfacing with other elements. As well as improving the hosting setup and stability, this project will address longstanding issues of data flow and quality whilst improving internal and external integrations (such as with ORCID and meta-repositories) to maximise research dissemination and process efficiencies (e.g. reducing need for manual interventions and checking). It will also ensure we meet external compliance and reporting demands, not least in the fast-developing Open Research arena.

² See www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/

2. With regard to supporting to Open Access, there are a number of initiatives already underway as itemised below to meet external funder compliance obligations and international initiatives such as Plan S³. Further adjustments may be necessary as and when the details of the next UK Research Excellence Framework are announced:
 - a. In order to help Brunel meet its new funder obligations under Plan S and the new UKRI Open Access Policy⁴, Library Services is signing up to appropriate so-called “Read and Publish” deals with the major journal publishers as they become available. These are intended to deliver better value for money for universities as they offer free access to journal content in return for guaranteed, capped income for article processing charges. They also reduce the amount of individual procurement transactions required for institutions.
 - b. We would like to trial Open Access Monograph publishing with appropriate publishers depending on VFM and as funds permit but this is in part dependent on the latest guidance from UKRI. In the next iteration of this plan, a more formal publishing agreement with a third-party such as UCL Press might be necessary.
 - c. We will improve our Research Data Management support, in part thanks to the new CRIS project and improved integration with university systems, but also with a more systematic approach to research data plans.
 - d. We will enhance our support for PGR students by taking out subscriptions to new information resources that will support writing of theses – such as thesis databases whilst embarking on a programme of retrospective digitisation of print theses as funds permit. We will also be able to improve our thesis dissemination via the British Library’s EThOS service⁵ with the CRIS system upgrade.
 - e. We will build on our COVID-era experience of delivering remote learning materials whether self-guided or pre-recorded by developing a range of learning assets on open research, open data and associated topics.

Collection management

Print collections

1. In order to achieve the Bannerman-related objectives cited earlier in this Plan, we will need to conduct a thorough review of our print collections to help identify candidates for safe disposal and release the space needed for future Bannerman refurbishments. The initial focus in 2021/22 will be identifying superfluous multiple copies and editions in our monograph collections followed by a review of our little-used periodicals collection on the third floor, with due consideration of online backfile availability. The objective will be to create a working, living collection in recognition of the fact that two thirds of our current monograph collection have not been borrowed at least once in the past 10 years. We will be transparent with the Colleges on our proposals and consider their feedback.
2. Our Collection Development Policy will also be updated to help achieve this objective with clear guidelines (for example) on systematic retention and disposal policies by discipline for former reading list materials, multiple editions and multiple copies.
3. In addition, we will take the opportunity to review the shelving sequence, organisation and signage of our print collections, responding to student feedback on their ease of use. We will

3 Plan S, www.coalition-s.org

4 UKRI open access policy, www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-open-access-policy

5 British Library EThOS, ethos.bl.uk

also be able to harness our new interactive 3D floorplans from 2021/22 to better guide students to find items quicker thanks to map integration with our library catalogue.

Eresource collections

The default Library Services procurement policy will remain “e-first over print” - which has been vindicated by our experiences during the recent COVID pandemic.

1. In order to develop this further, we will make a £100k funding bid for a pilot e-textbook programme to be conducted during 2022/23. This would implement and test a chosen e-textbook platform and procurement model on a selected course in each of the 3 Colleges. Working with Digital Education and other colleagues, we would then undertake a systematic evaluation of the academics and students on the pilot courses alongside analysis of usage data and analytics from the selected platform to produce a report of findings and recommendations on future funding models.

Significant infrastructure improvements are also required for our e-Library in addition to the launch of our new app mentioned previously:

2. Investment in a new Library Management System will substantially streamline back-office processes relating to eresource management, improve speed of availability of new eresources for our users as well as reduce complexity in our search interfaces.
3. In addition, another IS Digital Portfolio Project to upgrade our identity and authentication management infrastructure during the life of this Plan should finally enable us to unlock the necessary granular usage data by e.g. student level, discipline and course to make informed collection management decisions as well as feed into any wider University project on learner analytics. This work would also enable us to better support specialist groups such as alumni in future as we would be able to ringfence licensed content appropriately.

Audio-visual collections

1. We will undertake to identify additional online streaming collections for institutions of film and TV content which will reduce reliance on our stock of physical audio-visual media and support hybrid teaching. We will not format shift our existing DVD collection to Blu-Ray with this in mind.
2. We will also review streaming and online options for our existing physical CD and musical score collections with the relevant disciplines, taking into account the shape of future curricula and research projects.

Records, Archives & Special Collections (RASC)

There are 3 critical objectives across this team in the next 5 years:

1. Creation of high-quality accommodation and storage facilities for the combined service
 - a. The Records & Archives team and their extensive physical collections relocated from the Old School House premises off-site to the Bannerman Special Collections room during Summer 2021. There was not an opportunity to create a proper storage facility for these unique collections at the same time. Therefore, the major Bannerman refurbishment project objective in this Plan would enable the University to finally create a proper climate controlled and fire-resistant storage area and reading room facility on campus. This would ideally be built to sufficient a highly standard and specification to achieve the Archives Service Accreditation Standard as a quality kitemark.

- b. In the interim period, the RASC team will be able to take advantage of their new central Bannerman location to expand their opening times and mediated-access services as well as continue their outreach work as specified below.

2. Supporting “the move to e”

- a. RASC can assist the University to speed up its move to capturing and managing born-digital records/assets through the piloting of new software in specific departments (e.g. those deemed high risk from a compliance perspective) whilst systematically reviewing existing paper assets to ascertain what may be disposed of securely or sent for digitisation. All of these initiatives will reduce the footprint needed for physical storage in any future new building development mentioned above.
- b. In addition, RASC will continue the cataloguing of existing special collection assets in appropriate to maximise discovery whilst also embarking on selected digitisation projects, ideally partnering with appropriate external publishers/content providers to share the cost and benefits. Inclusion of appropriate RASC collection metadata in Library discovery systems will also be explored to maximise visibility to internal researchers.
- c. RASC will undertake to review processes and procedures to ensure they are streamlined and automated, especially those that require interactions with external customers, harnessing relevant Library Services infrastructure.
- d. RASC will develop its own formal collection development policy to support our efforts to attract new, appropriate deposits and ensure we have living collections in line with Brunel’s teaching and research priorities that we can then use as a basis for developing supportive learning resources and hands-on activities. This policy will be underpinned by the creation of a special ring-fenced acquisitions fund for special collections and archives.

3. Ensuring staff engagement for compliance

- a. In order to improve the visibility of records management (RM) within the institution, we would like to work with the Risk & Audit Committee to include records management in the future audit cycle in order to convey the importance of records management from a compliance and practical information management perspective, especially in a cloud-based working environment. This work will undoubtedly necessitate improvements in policies and procedures to be potentially overseen by the nascent Information Assurance Board.
- b. We will also work with Staff Development and Academic Services colleagues to develop appropriate training materials (and associated delivery mechanisms) to enable us to include record management in the formal annual compliance training list. Some form of staff survey may also be beneficial and will help raise profile of RM and RASC.
- c. As part of Library Services, RASC will also be able to take advantage of our new virtual and reconfigured physical spaces in to better showcase our assets in different types of exhibitions and encourage wider engagement with internal and external research communities.

Library Services Performance Management

1. Presuming that the National Student Survey (NSS) continues to include a dedicated Library-related question, the key performance indicator (KPI) for the success of this Plan will be for Brunel Library to achieve an overall % satisfaction score of $\geq 90\%$ within the next 5 years and meet or exceed the benchmarking group average score within 2 years.
2. Working with Information Services, we would like to start a new biennial, online joint Library & IT Customer Survey to inform our service planning, obtaining both a consistent, standardised measure of our performances across a range of activities over time as well as constructive prioritisation on our ideas for future enhancements. It will also fill in the gaps in our understanding from the current NSS Survey scores and comments of our different customer groups' needs. It is also likely to be a prerequisite for achieving the CSE accreditation mentioned previously – something which will also require us to set transparent performance measures across our operations (e.g. reshelving times, target delivery times for orders etc).
3. As part of Student and Academic Services, we will deliver an annual report to the Student Experience and Welfare Committee with an account of progress against the objectives laid out in this Plan. This will ensure there is formal accountability to Senate.
4. We will use our membership of SCONUL⁶ to conduct benchmarking of key metrics relating to expenditure, efficiency and service delivery against our University benchmarking group to feed into the annual planning round as required.

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⁶ The national professional body for UK university libraries, www.sconul.ac.uk